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ENGLAND AND FRANCE, 1939-1943

ENGLAND
AND
FRANCE

1939-1943

by

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Hamish Hamilton
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PREFACE

THE separation of the English and French peoples from normal intercourse and communication with each other for four years has left the great mass of the two nations ignorant of the other's development and efforts during the crises of the war. Even if there had been no deliberate effort to poison our relations by German and Vichy propaganda, much misunderstanding would have been bound to arise. The foreign broadcasts of the B.B.C. have done much to inform the French about British policies and the efforts and sacrifices of the British people; the leaflet raids and the activities of the clandestine press in France have also been a valuable channel of communication. But there must be much that many Frenchmen have not heard or not appreciated about Anglo-French relations and about Britain's part in the war.

The purpose of this book is to give to Frenchmen in the Colonies already free, and in due time in France itself, some account of the British attitude to France and how Great Britain survived the worst dangers and with new and powerful allies pressed on to victory. The book, therefore, was written with the French reader in mind. It has, however, been thought to be worth while to publish it in English also. The strains and vicissitudes of the war have made calm and consecutive thinking about France no easy task for Englishmen. Moreover, it often happens that in describing ourselves to other nations we learn to understand ourselves the better. It is in the hope that English readers may appreciate the book for these two reasons that it is now offered to the public.

I began to write the book some months after I had completed a book entitled *Public Opinion and the Last Peace*. While it covers very different ground and treats of very different periods and problems than the present book, both books contain certain expressions of political opinion, couched in the same vein and occasionally pointed with the same phrases. I permitted myself these occasional and often quite inadvertent repetitions, since in this book I thought of myself as addressing a purely French audience who would not be likely to come across my former book. Since it is desired to make the French and English texts correspond exactly,

I have not seen my way to amend the English version, and I apologize to any reader, who should do me the favour of reading both this book and my book on *Public Opinion*, for any slight redundancy he may notice.

R B. McCALLUM.

PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD,

May 26, 1944.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN on September 3rd, 1939, France and Great Britain declared war on the German Reich it was the end of a long journey which the two nations had taken together more in a sense of their mutual interdependence than in deep seated harmony. The two partners had fared far since June 28th, 1919, when in the Palace of Versailles their victorious statesmen had signed the Treaty which ended the greatest war in human history. The settlement which was then drawn up was liberal in its principles and yet comprehensive in precautions which it laid down against the defeated and guilty aggressor of the world's peace. The Treaty prescribed both a settlement of Europe for the present and a system of peace for the future. How this system crumbled, how a preponderance so great, alike in the moral as in the material sphere, was whittled away, will be judged severely and variously by future historians. But this may be noted: however far the policies of England and France have diverged, the differences have been more a matter of means than of ends. Both nations were satisfied with their position in the world, with the extent of their territories, with the number of their colonial possessions. Provided these could be maintained and secured neither France nor England had demands to make on the world. In spite of dangerous labour disputes and clamours of the class war both states were able to preserve and develop their social system without revolution. In spite of the acute crises of exchange of goods and currency which were inevitable in the aftermath of war, both nations increased their total wealth.

Nor was it only a question of material interest. The two nations shared the same ideas about cultural values and intellectual progress. They believed that these ends should be pursued in freedom. Liberty of speech and publication was maintained, one might even say indulged, to the verge of licence. The way of suppression and regimentation was never taken. The idea of an Athenian diversity prevailed over a Spartan rigidity. As a consequence the citizens of the two nations spoke freely enough about their allies across the water, often too freely and often with ignorance and recrimination. The Frenchman, as he turned his gaze across the Channel to study the mentality of a nation which he

thought to be his destined and necessary ally, was perplexed and irritated by a lack of precision and consecutiveness in ideas. He would find that the Englishman had a tendency to distinguish between the spirit and the letter of a treaty almost to the extent of eliminating the letter. He would find the English "empirical" to a degree that seemed imprudent and over-optimistic, almost indeed dishonest. The English proverb about crossing your fences when you come to them suggested not a deep intuitive wisdom but mere lack of reflection. The Frenchman asked himself with exasperation how one could be sure of the support of a people who sought to evade a definite engagement and preferred a "moral support", with complete freedom to interpret the occasion, method and magnitude of the support in circumstances not accurately to be predicted.-

Moreover, while both countries had approximately the same liberal humanitarian ideals, the moral climate of Great Britain differed from that of France, as a Protestant country must differ from a Catholic country. And the Protestantism of Britain differs from that of the Continent. Except in Scotland it is not the clear, lucid, ardent yet self-consistent doctrine of Calvin, but something more diffuse and comprehensive. The articles of faith of the Church of England were like the constitution of the Third Republic, that which divided Englishmen least. Their tendency was to evade definition and therefore to discourage too much precision of thought. English Protestantism is moral and ethical, a potent influence amongst those who have abandoned active faith even to the third generation. The English "good churchman" is a very different person from the French *croyant*, and instead of atheists there are only agnostics. It is a community in which there is no anti-clericalism, and in this land of sparsely filled churches people will often turn with remarkable unanimity to receive spiritual guidance from the Archbishop of Canterbury, as moral leader of the nation. This moral zeal of the English makes them harsh critics of others and thus earns for them their well-known reputation for hypocrisy and self-righteousness. But it makes them also harsh critics of themselves, endlessly debating the morality of their Government's actions, more concerned that their hands should be clean than that their arms should be strong. Thus when many Frenchmen were beginning to wonder whether perhaps it was prudent to enforce the Treaty of Versailles too rigidly, many Englishmen were tormenting themselves as to whether it

was right. The more severely realistic type of English statesman is always on guard against the moral fervour of his fellow-countrymen. He will denounce it as strongly as the most cynical foreigner, but he cannot question its sincerity. His task would be simpler if he could. The many demonstrations of "generosity" towards Germany which were evinced by England in the nineteen-twenties were not machiavellian, or astute. Their merit as well as their defect lay in their simplicity.

The Frenchman as he studied English opinion after 1919 soon became aware that England was not a fixed star in the European firmament but a planet subject to gravitational attraction from more distant bodies. These bodies, he knew, were the self-governing Dominions of the British Crown or, more generally, the English speaking world overseas. Here was another source of perplexity which required for its full understanding a knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon mentality and of the almost metaphysical constitution of the British Commonwealth of Nations. To be told that Canada or Australia "did not like" the Treaty of Locarno was exasperating to a Frenchman. If he was ignorant of the full extent of Dominion self-government he was inclined to demand that Great Britain should show herself master in her own family; if he did understand the constitutional position he was inclined to ask satirically whether Great Britain was not self-governing also. To a citizen of a well-centralized and unicellular state these mysterious entities, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, His Majesty's Government in Canada, His Majesty's Government in South Africa, whispering to each other over the ocean cables, seemed a riddle compared with which the Holy Roman Empire was simple. It was not as though these trans-oceanic states were great powers. Widely as they sprawl over the map in Mercator's projection, their population is small. Canada has fewer inhabitants than Czechoslovakia; Australia is no greater than Sweden. Of the seventy odd millions of British race living within the Empire forty-seven millions lived in the United Kingdom and thirty-eight millions of these are in England proper. The United Kingdom, too, in normal times provides more than its proportionate share of the armaments and armed forces of the Empire. The Royal Navy in particular is manned mainly by Englishmen, and it is England that recruits most of the professional fighting men. Englishmen fight their own wars and are the first to bear the brunt of battle. Hostile propaganda always spreads the lie that English-

men lay the main burden of war on the sister peoples, and Englishmen often encourage the lie by their contemptuous silence on the subject and their own tendency to give currency to the part played by Scotch, Irish or Dominion troops. But the statistics of the last war and of this, of men serving or of men fallen, disprove it utterly.

But although it is in Westminster that the crucial decisions must be taken, and although it is on the people of the United Kingdom that the first burden must fall, the English cherish their bonds with their brethren overseas and are anxious to treat their susceptibilities with full respect. It is not the numbers that matter but the feeling of community. It is in the nature of things a community they cannot quite feel with any nation on the Continent of Europe, for no European nation is English speaking, no European nation is peopled with our blood-relations, no European nation so exactly produces our own political institutions. In the hackneyed phrase, England is in Europe and not of Europe, and has not altogether escaped a somewhat hybrid mentality. Thoughtful Englishmen always realize their dependence on Europe. It is worthy of note that in the period between the wars the only powerful journal which took a consistently isolationist attitude towards Europe was the *Daily Express* of Lord Beaverbrook, and Lord Beaverbrook is a native of a small Canadian Province, New Brunswick. An appeal to the traditions of European civilization rings well in English ears. Some importations from Europe, however, will be denounced as "*Continental practices*".

While the Frenchman studying England saw much to perplex and dissatisfy him, the Englishman, it must be admitted, was often ignorant and uncomprehending about France. Of the old animosities dating from the days of the secular strife between the two nations nothing now remains. Joan of Arc is a heroine to English children and is commemorated in Winchester Cathedral, whose Bishop handed her over to the executioners. There was a cult of Napoleon after Waterloo, and his career is taught by our historians, not indeed with approval but with appreciative understanding. England has been at peace with France for as long as she has been at peace with America. Yet the English in the last two decades have often been unfriendly to France. There have not, it is true, been any prominent Francophobes in the sense that M. Maurras is an Anglophobe, but there has at times been a vague Franco-phobia. This has not implied any positive desire to injure France,

to reduce her territory, to prevent her economic development. It has been rather a strong difference of outlook on the question of how to preserve the things which in common with France Englishmen have ardently desired - security, liberty and peace. There is in England a prejudice against ideas and customs which can be called Latin. This prejudice originally was no doubt religious, but in more recent times covered many fields of manners and thought. What we take to be the characteristic virtues of French thought are somewhat suspect. Clarity, Englishmen think, may become deceptive, rationality in the form of rationalism has not always a good flavour, and the word logical is often thought of as definitely *pejoratif*. A political proposition made by the French will be dismissed as rigid, logical and legalistic. It is not that the Englishman actually wants the proposition to be loose, illogical and unlawful, but he may feel himself dictated to by the precision of the language and too firmly bound by the logical implications of the proposal. Another characteristic of the French is sometimes complained of. This is lubricity. The use of the ingenious face-saving formula, such as is sometimes heard within the walls of the Palais Bourbon, comes less readily to the English politician. He prefers the blunt *volte face* without pretending to rationalize it by some fine distinction. The Englishman preserves his self-respect by refusing to quibble, the Frenchman preserves his by a display of intellectual virtuosity.

For the first few years after the war criticism of France was indulged in mainly by the Left in British politics, for they were in opposition to the Government which made the Treaty and they were the self-appointed apostles of humanity and good will. They denounced revenge and provocation and wondered at the animosity of the French against Germany and their "obsession" with security. Later on the Conservatives also weakened in their attitude to the Treaties, less from any shame about their "inhumanity" than from doubts as to their practicability as a permanent settlement. The Right in both countries was lukewarm or even hostile to the League of Nations. Both regarded it as primarily the work of President Wilson. To the French this marked it as Anglo-Saxon idealism. The Right in England were equally on their guard against idealism, but were also unfavourably impressed by its precision, its juristic and almost academic flavour, its Latin and legalistic qualities. Both had some reason for their views, for Wilson was undoubtedly an Anglo-Saxon and also an idealist. He

was also a professor of jurisprudence, and his mind may be said to have had a "Latin" cast, which some have traced to his Scottish and Calvinistic antecedents.

But the differences between the two countries were not differences as to how to make use of the blessings of peace but only how to preserve them. It was indeed a vital question. The English conception of making Germany satisfied was opposed to the French conception of keeping her harmless. The divergence was not always very wide, especially during the Briand epoch, and both peoples always felt that in a crisis they would have to act together. And so it was. Both nations joined in the warning to Germany which preceded the Czech crisis of 1938, and both joined in the surrender of Munich. Munich found the same confusion of ideas in both countries. On the right there were elements, stronger in France than in England, that were positively favourable to Nazi Germany, but there were also elements, men like Mr. Churchill and Louis Marin, who denounced the so-called settlement unreservedly. On the Left both in England and France there were groans of despair and yet sighs of relief, and in neither country had the Left an enviable record in the maintenance of armaments. It was indeed a crisis of temperament rather than a crisis of doctrine. But one thing was clear, that if Munich proved, as so many feared, to be a hollow farce, both countries must move forward together just as they had retreated together.

The crisis came almost in a moment of time on March 15th, 1939. On the afternoon of March 14th there were disturbing rumours of German pressure on Prague, ostensibly in favour of Slovak independence, and an obscure personality, M. Tiso, was acting as Hitler's pawn in Bratislava. In Berlin our Ambassadors, M. Coulondre and Sir Nevile Henderson were sending hurried warnings to their Governments. Next day it was known that German troops were in Prague, in Plzen and Brno. The policy of Munich was completely bankrupt. It still remains uncertain whether the surrender of Munich gained valuable time for Britain and France to improve their armaments or whether Germany did not increase her lead during 1939. But it was clear that the last retreat had been executed. Both nations knew that they must fight or fall. The Nazis still hoped that France and England might be separated, and we find M. Coulondre doing his best to cure that illusion. He had maintained, very firmly, that whatever happened in the future there would be joint Anglo-French action.

Morally the war began on March 15th. The time and the occasion of the opening of hostilities was still uncertain. Hitler was too versatile an artist in the finding of grievances for accurate predictions to be made. In the meantime there was much to be done both in France and England.

I

MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 1939

THE occupation of Prague brought together persons and parties who had previously been at variance over the wisdom of the Munich settlement. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax both condemned the German action in their speeches to Parliament, and the British Ambassador in Berlin was instructed to join with his French colleague in a protest which made it clear that the new annexation was not recognized by the Western powers. If Mr. Chamberlain in his first statement to Parliament was somewhat formal and guarded, he spoke out plainly enough on March 17th. He was addressing a meeting in Birmingham, the great industrial city which since the days of his father, Joseph Chamberlain, had been unswervingly loyal to his family. Chamberlain in Birmingham was like M. Herriot in Lyons. The citizens of Birmingham were his best defenders and had applauded Munich. On March 17th he left no doubt in their minds that that policy had run its course. The whole nation listened to the speech on the radio that evening. He made no secret of his bitterness and disillusion and asked the question that was in everyone's mind: "Is this the end of an old adventure or the beginning of a new." And speaking of the conduct of the Nazis in Prague he observed, "What was particularly sinister, they heard of the appearance of the Gestapo." With that word he struck a resounding chord. The feeling of the British people may fluctuate with regard to continental nations easily and perhaps aimlessly, but their hatred of tyranny is constant. To rouse them from their deep pacific mood requires more than threats of opposing interests, rivalry in trade and Empire. But the name of a tyrant will stir them. When Chamberlain of all men, the Prince of the Peace from Birmingham, at last allowed himself "to take note" of the Gestapo, it was indeed a sign. He was placing himself in the line of the English statesmen who had denounced the Austrian General Haynau, the Neapolitan "King Bomba" and Abdul Hamid the damned. From now on the opposition and the anti-Munichers were suspicious of the Government's skill and adaptability to the new situation but not of its fundamental divorce from Hitlerian policies.

The press of the capital and the provinces reached an almost unprecedented unanimity. The London *Times* which in September 1938 had published the leading article, the fatal article as many had thought, which heralded the surrender consummated at Munich, turned suddenly and decisively. Its comments were clear enough.

"For the first time since Nazism came to power", said *The Times* writer, "German policy has moved unequivocally and deliberately into the open." (The words "for the first time" are eloquent of the reluctance of this great organ to allow itself to be impressed by the outspoken aggressiveness of National Socialism, an example of what a British historian has wittily called that "refusal to notice anything odd about Nazi Germany".) But having crossed the Rubicon, the article went on firmly enough: "There is nothing left for debate in this crude and brutal act of oppression and suppression. The German Government has scarcely troubled to veil it. . . . The world is invited to believe that the Czechs have voluntarily yielded to an alien race the most precious of all their possessions - their national independence."

The Conservative *Daily Telegraph* used even stronger language, "A monstrous outrage is the mildest term that can be applied to the events in Central Europe." The Liberal *Manchester Guardian* drew the moral "that this is not an end but a stage in a deliberate process". The socialist *Daily Herald* was even more emphatic, "Let the British people not deceive themselves; this does concern us, and it is not inevitable because of their own failure and treacheries. It is the postscript to Munich. What is happening to-day, Hitler intended to happen in September last. . . . This is not the time for self-deception. Let us face the facts and the threat."

These extracts are representative of the general opinion.

On March 21st, only six days after the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, the British public turned its gaze for a moment from Central Europe to the imposing ceremonies which accompanied the visit of President Lebrun to King George VI. If these ceremonies were less brilliantly organized than the splendid reception accorded a year previously to the British Sovereign in Paris, they were somewhat more solemn. And this corresponded to the change in the political situation. In 1938 the state of Europe was indeed serious and it was recognized that there was a possibility of war. In 1939 war was almost a certainty to all but the most careless minds. The high point of the visit was the reception of

President Lebrun in Westminster Hall by both Houses of Parliament, an occasion without precedent. In that mediaeval building which had cradled the Law and the Parliament of England, the President of the Republic heard addresses from the Lord Chancellor and from the Speaker of the House of Commons, and made an eloquent and felicitous reply. That the visit of the French President was natural and welcome, and a visit by one of the Dictators a moral impossibility, underlined the inherent community of ideals between France and England.

The compliments and solemnities being over, Britain returned to business. On the day after the President's departure the House of Commons discussed the grim problem of Civil Defence. A bill was presented by the Government to arm the authorities with all the necessary powers. This was merely the framework of a great voluntary movement which was proceeding all over the land, in town and in country. By August 1st Sir John Anderson, the Minister in charge of Civil Defence, was able to report that of the 2,000,000 men and women required to take part in defence in air-raids 1,900,000 had already enrolled. Two and a half million steel shelters for use in courts and gardens had been ordered and one million already delivered. That these "Anderson" shelters were immediately necessary no one in England doubted. It must be remembered that it was the universal expectation that war would begin with heavy air-raids on our cities. No one could then foresee the long interval of nine months which actually took place between the outbreak of the war and the bombing of England. It was perhaps a little simple-minded. The military doctrine of concentration of power might have led to the conclusion that Hitler would let his enemies feel the weight of the Luftwaffe *one by one*. A study of Nazi propaganda technique might have suggested that odium might be engendered between the Allies by giving one of them a temporary immunity while others suffered. But the English were determined not to deceive themselves and resolved to anticipate the worst. National vanity even made them assume that they would receive the first and heaviest attentions of the enemy. They believed that war meant bombing, immediate and severe.

On March 31st Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons made his famous statement on Poland. If Poland was made the object of unprovoked aggression, then the British Government "would lend Poland all the support in their power". He added,

to the deep satisfaction of the House, that the French Government "authorized him to state that they stand in the same position". There are two points to note about this cardinal declaration of British policy. In the first place it was a complete revolution in the British attitude to Central Europe. The Treaty of Locarno in 1925 had not bound Britain in respect of the eastern frontiers of Germany. Isolationist opinion in the United Kingdom disliked such commitments, and the diag of the Dominion Governments accentuated this tendency. Moreover, the Polish frontiers had been one of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty which had been most frequently attacked by English critics. Nor was Poland, under the semi-fascist regime of Pilsudski's Colonels, popular in England, least of all with the Left. But now the question was not the justice of any particular frontier line but whether any frontier or any national sovereignty was secure. It may have been unwise, shortsighted, loose-minded of Great Britain not to have pledged herself more thoroughly to the frontiers of Versailles. Perhaps President Wilson had been right when in Article X of the Covenant of the League of Nations he had specified that the member states should guarantee each other's frontiers, a proposition which had appeared rigid, over-legalistic and unpractical to the cautious realism of the Conservatives and to the facile idealism of the Radicals. Yet when the English people were driven at such a time and at such peril to make an invasion of Poland their *casus belli*, it revealed to the world the extraordinary odium which Nazi Germany had bred and the recklessness with which she had thrown away a case, once admitted to be good, by casting aside all sense of limitation and by valuing nothing unless it was the product of violence and terror.

The other point of interest is that on this occasion Britain for once made her position clear. It has often been thought that in 1914 Sir Edward Grey, by making it clear in advance that Great Britain would be a party to any war that broke out, could thereby have avoided war. To many Frenchmen this has been an article of faith and has induced many bitter reflections and reproaches. In England also this view has had its adherents but not so many. Sir Edward Grey was not the most brilliant of English statesmen, but no other statesmen of the century has been so perfectly representative of the English character. His countrymen have been reluctant to condemn him. In 1939 there sat in Grey's chair at the Foreign Office another Englishman of similar character.

Lord Halifax, lacking in many of the more subtle endowments of the politician, was like Grey a man respected for the deepest probity, the type of the great gentleman in politics. Both in their day received that peculiar mark of esteem which is denoted by election to the dignified office of Chancellor of the University of Oxford. What Grey hesitated to do in 1914, Halifax did in 1939. On both occasions the event was war. The fact is that when a country like Germany is under the government of despots surrounded by military leaders whose life and being is wrapped up in the expectation and hope of war, these men are likely to have their war as and when they want it. If a possible enemy hesitates to warn them with precision, that is treated as encouragement; if a categorical warning is issued to them, then, defined as "provocation", it will serve their purposes just as well. In 1914 the German Government would no doubt have welcomed English neutrality, but everything was ready to deal with her opposition. The invasion of Belgium was prepared with meticulous care and the British Army estimated for with tolerable accuracy. How nearly the calculations of the German Staff succeeded we all remember. In 1940 they did succeed in everything that pertained to the continent of Europe. In regard to the expected submission of England the calculations failed. That insular detachment of mind which made England so often incalculable to her friends rendered her even more dangerously incalculable to her enemies. She did not yield, and an astonished world witnessed a nation demonstrating in the sphere of politics and of military power the old maxim of faith, "*credo quia impossibile*".

Chamberlain's pledge to Poland on March 31st reassured the public in general. No treaty had yet been signed, but the speech was like a covering note issued by an insurance company to be operative until the drawing up of a formal and detailed agreement. One question still troubled the public mind. Could the support of Russia be obtained? In Parliament pressure on the Government was kept up to this end, and many Opposition members doubted the zeal and good will of ministers. Mr. Lloyd George, the most consistently prescient of British statesmen, uttered a solemn warning on the danger of opposing Germany with the aid of eastern powers of only the second magnitude. On April 3rd, Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, visited London. On April 24th M. Gafencu came on behalf of Rumania. London arranged credits to both Governments. The Russian Government refused to give that

guarantee to Poland and Rumania which the British statesmen saw as the one effective warning to Nazi aggressors. Instead a proposal was made that there should be a wider pact between Russia, France and Great Britain, in which smaller powers should later join. Was it the wider view and the larger hope, or was it in effect ingenious evasion? Many were anxious about it, but the school of thought that believed the Soviets to be always right continued to put the blame on Chamberlain and Halifax. On May 5th came the news that M. Litvinoff, the former high priest of collective security, had resigned his office as Commissar for Foreign Affairs in Moscow. It was a sinister sign. Litvinoff was the author of the famous phrase, "peace is indivisible". Did his resignation mean that Moscow had now come to the conclusion that peace was after all relative, to be divided into areas and fractions? None the less the Government persisted. On June 7th, a diplomat, Mr. Strang, was sent with a mission to Moscow, and on July 31st, it was announced that a Franco-British military mission would proceed to Moscow. Hopes rose high.

Meanwhile on Good Friday, April 7th, another shock had been given to general European security. On that day Italian forces invaded and occupied Albania. The technique was similar to the Nazi methods in Austria and Czechoslovakia, the same exploitation of imagined grievances, the sudden swoop by land and air, the perfect demonstration of the feebleness of the victim. The reduced scale of the victim and the forces deployed represented rather well the different magnitudes of German and Italian military power, but it was none the less impressive. It was a severe shock to the most obstinate believers, numerous both in England and France, in the peaceful intentions of the Duce. In view of the Anglo-Italian agreement of November 1938 it was just as severe a snub to Chamberlain as the occupation of Prague had been. Mediterranean appeasement was discredited as clearly as Danubian appeasement.

It was in the light of these disturbing events that Parliament dealt with problems of armament and supply. It was now clearly realized that to have the opportunity of preserving peace Britain must build up an army on more than an insular scale. Apart from the professional and regular army, England's defence on land was entrusted to the Territorial Army, a voluntary force. On March 29th the Government stated that it was to be placed on a war establishment and doubled. But that was not enough. On April

26th the Prime Minister announced its intention of adopting conscription. In May the Military Training Bill was passed and on August 1st the first conscripts, or militiamen as they were called, joined the colours. In the meantime the war office was busy preparing camps and arranging for the training of the soldiers. If anyone had any doubt of the wisdom of adopting conscription it should have been set at rest by the chorus of approval of the foreign press in all friendly countries. Yet there was some formal opposition of the Commons. By that reflex action which all parties of the Left seem to make when confronted by strong authoritative measures, the Labour Party disapproved of conscription at that moment.

Now this did not mean that the Labour Party was composed of pacifists. If we use the word pacifist to denote those who believed in non-resistance, the Labour party never had been officially "pacifist". It had been indeed deeply *pacifist*, grudging money for armaments and reluctant to think in military terms. But long before Munich the Socialists in general had been advocates of the strong stand against aggression. They had denounced their Conservative opponents as either fascist sympathizers or as weaklings. Was their opposition to compulsory service mere folly and vacuity of mind? There were many who thought that and who think it still. To most English Conservatives it is an almost complete defence of the poor showing of their Governments in foreign affairs to point out that the Socialists, representing so numerous and well-organized a section of the people, more than one-third as measured by electoral votes, would not seriously consider armaments on a scale adequate for the firm policies which they demanded. But the British people have a strong belief that voluntary methods of recruitment have an inherent superiority to compulsory methods, and the Labour leaders were able to argue with some show of reason that in the spring of 1939 there were sufficient volunteers to meet immediate needs and to absorb the supplies and the training personnel available. They were not opposing eventual use of compulsion. But their opposition had a purely formal ring, and the people accepted the Military Service Bill quietly enough. However little some democrats like to admit it, conscription is the most equitable form of providing military service, and there was some comfort even to the critics in seeing all classes and professions brought into the net.

On April 20th the Government announced another important

preparation. It was decided to set up a Ministry of Supply to organize the purchase and manufacture of material of war. Another debate in Parliament aroused deep public interest and instilled some confidence. This was the annual debate on the Naval estimates. Mr. Shakespeare, the Minister who presented them to the Commons, had a heartening account to give of the rapid construction and delivery of ships. He also gave some examples of the anti-aircraft firepower of modern battleships. This was a crucial question on which all Englishmen brooded. Could naval forces operate at sea in the face of air power? In a word, were navies now obsolete? This was a terrible query for Englishmen to make. No proof could be given, but it was comforting to learn of the tremendous volume of fire that an attacking air force would meet. After four years of war we now know some of the answers. We have seen that ships operating on an enemy coast take terrible punishment, as at Dunkirk or Crete. We have seen what fighter protection from land or aircraft-carriers can do to render a fleet secure. In spite of the belief trumpeted abroad in Berlin and Rome, and echoed sometimes quietly in Paris, the British Navy was not knocked out from the air. Indeed in the first two years of the war the heaviest blow struck from the air against capital ships was struck not against the British but by them, at Taranto. It was left to a really great naval power, Japan, to administer to both British and Americans a severe lesson in the possibilities of surprise air attack.

The months of May and June were less tense than March and April, although few permitted themselves to be optimists. From May 6th till June 22nd the King and Queen were absent from the Kingdom on a visit to Canada. It had been at first arranged that they would travel in the battle-cruiser *Repulse*, but at the last moment the Admiralty thought it wiser to keep the *Repulse* stationed in home waters, and the liner *Empress of Britain* was used for the royal journey. The enthusiastic reception given by the Government and people of Canada to their King created a favourable impression, but still more impressive was the fact that the King travelled South to visit Washington as the guest of President Roosevelt. The occasion, it is true, was only formal and ceremonial, and it bound neither Government in the political, still less in the military sphere. None the less the spectacle of the heir of George III being received by the successor of General Washington underlined the common sympathies of the two nations and en-

couraged their friends on the Continent of Europe. It may perhaps have fostered illusions, for it inclined people to overlook the deeply rooted isolationism of America and the numerous pockets of obstinate anti-British sentiment. But it did foreshadow a growing spirit of collaboration leading to the days when President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill met as a general staff in the White House and to the momentous decisions taken on French soil at Casablanca.

From the end of June onwards the situation in Europe grew steadily worse. The aggressive intentions of Germany became more clearly evident. After occupying Prague on March 15th Hitler had not lost a day in preparing for his next coup. On the 16th M. Leon Noel, the French Ambassador in Warsaw, had reported evidence of German hostility to Poland. "Herr von Moltke does not conceal his ill-humour" On March 27th the French consul at Danzig reported to his Government that the retrocession of that city was under discussion in German circles. On the next day the French chargé d'affaires in Berlin reported that the position of the German minority in Silesia was about to be raised. On the 30th the Polish colony in Berlin were advising their wives and children to leave and Polish students in Germany were going home. Next day came the statement by the British and French Governments. If Hitler had intended to overrun Poland and Danzig with the help of the momentum produced by his occupation of Prague, he hesitated and took no decisive step. The warning of the Western Powers had at least gained time.

With the passing of the summer and the gathering in of the harvest, the classic period for Germany's major military adventures, the danger signs grew more obvious. The British Government made its intentions clear. Lord Halifax, on June 29th, gave an address to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, a body representative of the most serious and learned students of foreign policy. Full publicity was given to this speech, which gave unmistakable warning to anyone willing to listen to it. On July 10th Mr. Chamberlain spoke in Parliament on the question of Danzig. This statesman, who in 1938 had affected to speak of Czechoslovakia as a far-off country about which we knew little, showed himself quite well informed on the affairs of the even more distant Hanseatic city. The much neglected and frequently abused considerations which had moved the makers of the Treaty to set up the Free City were explained, self-determination for the Germans

of Danzig, reasonable provision for the economic needs of Poland. Once again the procedure of 1914 was carefully avoided. There was nothing of the "hamletism" of Sir Edward Grey in evidence. Notice was served on the aggressor and served in time. From Berlin there came no sign that it was marked and digested. In Paris M. Bonnet was receiving from M. Noël in Warsaw an accurate explanation of the place of Danzig and Gdynia in Polish economy with details of the port facilities and the different kinds of commodities which the two ports could handle.

It is unnecessary to go into all the details and incidents of the war of nerves which Hitler waged through July and August. That kind of nightmare was all too familiar. People in England were more concerned to learn on August 1st that plans for evacuation of children from the cities were complete and to observe that *The Times*, which last year had led the rot, was now calling for firmness. On August 9th the King inspected one hundred and thirty ships of the Navy at Portland on the Channel coast. Previously 12,000 naval reservists had been called to the colours to avoid a hurried last-minute mobilization. But Hitler had still his ace of trumps to play, a blow in the nerve war which eclipsed all his previous strokes. On August 18th *The Times* had assured an anxious public that the military conversations in Moscow were proceeding rapidly and well. On the twentieth the non-aggression pact between Ribbentrop and Molotov was signed in Moscow. The British public read the news in their morning papers. It was indeed a stunning blow. But the general feeling was not that surrender was necessary but that war was inevitable, although it must now be a war in the most unfavourable circumstances. Moreover, the circumstances of the Moscow pact produced a high degree of national unity. The Conservative, who had always been impressed to some extent by the virtues of Germany as an anti-bolshevik power, was now thoroughly disgusted, and the Socialist who had maintained that Russia's hand had only to be grasped in the firm clasp of friendship was utterly dumbfounded. A centripetal movement took place in British politics and old differences were for the moment forgotten.

Mr. Chamberlain, who had ventured on a holiday to Scotland, at once returned and held a cabinet. Parliament was summoned next day, the 24th. It was one of the most remarkable days in its long history. A full house listened to the grave statement by the Prime Minister in which he declared that the Government, un-

deterred by the Moscow pact, stood firm in its stand against aggression. He was supported by 427 votes to 4, the only dissidents being the fractional Independent Labour Party and an isolated pacifist member. The Government presented a bill for plenary powers for the Government, the *Emergency Powers Act*. This bill empowered the Government to do by decree (*Orders in Council*) most of what would normally be done by ordinary legislation. The House wasted no time over it, but some points were discussed and the Home Secretary gave some reasonable assurances as to the manner of its working. It was sent in the evening to the Lords and rapidly passed through all its stages. In spite of the urgency of the occasion all the due and ancient forms were observed. That very morning an official, the Clerk of Parliaments, had returned from a holiday at sea. At Southampton he was hurried ashore in a special launch and hastened to London to be in his place in the House of Lords. There, in his wig and robe, he pronounced the royal assent on the Emergency Powers Bill, which delivered up for the time being to the executive Government so many of the much-prized liberties of the subject. "*Le Roy le veult*." Contrary to the false ideas which enemies of parliamentary government entertain, the British Parliament can act with speed and dignity in a crisis. It was to show this quality again in the weeks that followed.

II

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE WAR

WHEN the French and British Governments let it be known that the Moscow pact between Germany and Russia would not have the effect of nullifying the promises to Poland, war as we can now see was certain. At the time indeed most Frenchmen and Englishmen recognized that hopes of peace were vain. It is not necessary to follow in detail the diplomatic exercises which preceded the opening of hostilities, the journeys of Sir Nevile Henderson, the British Ambassador, between Berlin and London, the exchange of letters between Hitler and Daladier, the appeals of President Roosevelt, of Queen Wilhelmina and King Leopold and of the Pope. There were also the usual references in the Italian Press to the desirability of peace with justice, but by that time all but the merest simpletons knew that "justice" was a convenient shorthand term for Savoy, Nice, Corsica and Tunis. After Munich, after Prague, people felt that these manifestoes and appeals were only solemn incantations, proper and seemly no doubt, but with no more power to allay the tempest than those ceremonies with which animistic savages seek to placate the elements. Hitler well knew that France and Great Britain alone were standing to arms, and he had his plans for dealing with them.

On the morning of September 1st, 1939, the news of the invasion of Poland reached the people of France and England, and all were prepared for the fighting to begin. There followed the strange two days' delay before the French and British ultimatums were delivered. Those who believed that it was the last desperate chance to stop the advance of Nazism were depressed and anxious. The cause of the delay was the last-minute appeal of Mussolini for peace. In the light of the Italian performance in the war it is reasonable to suppose that Mussolini was in earnest in his desire for peace. But he was not in a position to bring any pressure to bear on Germany. He could not threaten to act against her; he could not even threaten to refuse to go with her in full diplomatic support. As a mediator he was helpless. Yet there lingered still some shreds of credit for his intervention at the time of Munich

and there lingered also the obstinate hope of a last-minute miracle. But the Allied Governments had to insist that the German armies must not only stop in their course but evacuate Polish soil. It was impossible, in view of the Gadarene-swine mentality of Fascism and Nazism, the tendency to go on rushing down steep places could not be stayed. What did cause comment at the time was the lack of synchronization between the British and French ultimatums. Mr. Chamberlain explained at the time that the difficulties of concerting measures by cable and telephone were responsible. Herr Ribbentrop's policy of receiving the two Allied Ambassadors separately, and his judicious absence when M. Coulondre called on him at midday, were also contributory causes. But there is also reason to think that M. Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, was reluctant to the last. Like Macbeth he was "infirm of purpose" and had to have the dagger thrust into his hand. A reading of the French and British diplomatic documents on the prolegomena of the war certainly suggests that while the French Ambassadors in Berlin had fewer illusions as well as more literary skill than their British colleague, M. Bonnet was, in comparison with Lord Halifax, a weaker vessel. But M. Daladier was robust enough, and the delay of six hours in the formal declaration of war was short; it was very much shorter than the time-lag between the French and British declarations in 1914.

It was a solemn moment in England when at 11.15 on that Sunday morning, Mr. Chamberlain came to the microphone to tell his fellow-countrymen that for the last fifteen minutes they had been at war. It was fitting that he should do so, for in times of deep crisis the British people turn to their Prime Minister with respect and are willing to still the rancour of opposition. He rose to the occasion. His voice and words were solemn and moving but firm. With an unusual touch of artistry he ended on a note of paternal benediction to which he was entitled by reason of his age as well as of his office. "And now may God bless you and may He defend the right, for it is evil things that you are fighting." Evil things! One of the most striking phenomena of the war in England has been from the first this sense of being in conflict with positive evil. Many individuals indeed have since testified to a change in their philosophy of life in this respect, to belief in evil as an active force and not merely the denial of good or the maladjustment of material advantage. This conviction or faith gave many people the resolution both to enter the struggle and to sustain it. A French

writer (M. René Pinon, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, August 1939) said of Nazism: "Il n'y a donc pas de milieu, il faut l'adopter comme un *credo*, le subir comme une servitude, ou le combattre comme un fleau." To fight it as a scourge was the general resolve of Englishmen, as strong in those who only recently had become convinced of this truth as of those who had learned it earlier.

By eleven o'clock on September 3rd Germany found herself at war with His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. This meant that she had to face the greatest naval power in the world, equal to America in the weight and number of her ships, vastly superior to all other nations not only in the tradition of naval warfare but in possessing a far greater number of officers and men with actual experience in fighting at sea. She also had to face an Air Force supplied with the finest engines and incomparable pilots and directed by a staff which, thinking of air-power as an independent activity, had organized it excellently both for offence and defence. The British army cannot have weighed so heavily on the minds of the German General Staff. Competently trained and reasonably well equipped, it could not however in the first year of war be more than an auxiliary to the French. Its deficiencies in training and tactics were probably no more serious than that of the French army. It was not ready to withstand the heavily armed and powerfully gunned tanks which von Brauchitsch was able to throw against it by the spring of 1940, but it did prove capable of defeating and destroying the much more numerous army of Graziani in Libya, and of conquering Abyssinia with astonishing speed. Behind this army lay a nation a little larger in population than France, forty-seven millions, a great engineering and industrial nation. Moreover, with the declaration of war by Great Britain the whole Colonial Empire and the Empire of India was at war. This meant that there were bases and sources of supply in all quarters of the world. Malta, capable of more resistance than anyone then dreamed, lay within sixty miles of the coast of Italy, while in the distant Falkland Islands, near the coast of South America, a damaged British warship could shelter for repairs. At Colombo in Ceylon was a harbour and base which would yet prove the *ne plus ultra* of Japanese expansion to the West. On the west and east coasts of Africa and across the Pacific Ocean stretch territories and islands which might prove of the greatest significance.

All these diverse places and communities came into the war

with Great Britain. It was otherwise with the self-governing Dominions. They were free to choose. By the law of their constitutions and by the Statute of Westminster, which governed their relations with Great Britain, they could not be at war until their own Governments declared them to be so. With very little delay they gave their answers. The news of Great Britain's declaration of war on September 3rd reached Australia at 6.15 p.m. Exactly one hour later the Commonwealth Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, made a broadcast stating that Australia was also at war. In New Zealand the Government was without its leaders, for the Prime Minister, Mr. Savage, was ill, and his deputy was in London. None the less on September 3rd the New Zealand Government cabled a message of concurrence with the action of the British Government. Two days later Mr. Savage, speaking from his home to the people of New Zealand, spoke the feeling of the nation: "Not a moment too soon have Great Britain and France taken up arms against so faithless and unscrupulous an adversary."

Canada moved more slowly. The Prime Minister, Mr. Mackenzie King, decided to summon the Parliament of the Dominion. It should be noted here that a formal vote of Parliament was not constitutionally necessary for a declaration of war. The Dominions have constitutions which are in most ways replicas of the British constitution and bear little resemblance to that of the United States. The declaration of war is a prerogative of the executive, that is, of the Crown. The responsible ministers exercise it with the formal approval of the King's representative, the Governor-General. They must, of course, have the assurance that Parliament will support them, but it is a matter of policy and discretion whether that is given by an actual vote. The Canadian Parliament was summoned in special session on September 7th and opened by the usual "speech from the throne" by Lord Tweedsmuir, the Governor-General. In the Lower House the Prime Minister declared that a vote adopting the usual address in reply to the Governor's speech would be interpreted by the Government as approval of the policy of war. There was a debate extending over two days. Opposition was voiced by some French Canadian deputies and by some extreme socialists, but the most eloquent speech for war came from a French Canadian Minister, Mr. Lapointe. When the debate was concluded the Government policy was supported without a division. The *Canada Gazette* of September 10th published a proclamation of a state of war with

Germany. Before rising the House voted a credit of 100,000,000 dollars for war expenditure.

In South Africa the situation was more complex. A coalition Government was in power with the anti-British Nationalist, General Hertzog, as Prime Minister, and the pro-British General Smuts as his Deputy. Both men had fought in arms against the British in the war of 1899 to 1902. But General Smuts had fully accepted the Imperial connection and in the last war had conquered German East Africa in a brilliant campaign and had signed the Treaty of Versailles. Britain's declaration of war found the two statesmen opposed. General Hertzog proposed a resolution in Parliament on September 4th, advocating neutrality. His colleague, General Smuts, proposed a hostile amendment favouring war. After a lively debate the House divided and supported General Smuts by 80 votes to 67. General Hertzog resigned and General Smuts formed a cabinet. On September 7th war was formally declared. Thirty-seven years had elapsed since the Boers had laid down their arms. Thirty-three years had elapsed since the British statesman Campbell-Bannerman had, in a masterly gesture of generosity, restored to the defeated enemy the power of self-government. And now *for the second time* South Africa was at war by the side of Great Britain in a more dangerous struggle against a more terrible enemy with fewer allies to assist them. A world less tormented and harassed than the world of 1939 might have paused to marvel at this remarkable vindication of the British Liberal policy of casting bread upon the waters.

With these acts the white empire, the free empire, was at war. It is true that these states were not of large population or well-organized for war. But they were rich in good fighting men, abundantly rich in raw materials. The South Africans were to sweep through Somaliland to Addis Ababa; the Australians were to occupy Tobruk and later, with the Americans, to drive the Japanese from the swamps of Papua; the New Zealanders were to take part in the forcing of the Mareth line in Tunisia against Rommel; the Canadians were to build up a large Air Force and even a Navy of their own, they were to bomb Berlin and Essen and Cologne.

There was, however, one exception to the unity of the British Commonwealth: Ireland. No one was surprised when the Irish State declared for a policy of neutrality. The Prime Minister, Mr. de Valera, the Irish Robespierre, who had included in a life

of devoted service to his ideals a spell in a British prison, had no difficulty in securing a unanimous vote in the Dail (Chamber of Deputies) for neutrality. It is true that Mr de Valera had once, as President of the Assembly of the League of Nations, spoken strongly of the need for collective security and for sanctions. It is true that the victim of Germany was Poland. Poland, after Ireland the most Catholic state in Europe, with Ireland the classic example of a martyr nation. These considerations were as nothing in face of a secular enmity of seven hundred years. If a more formal excuse was wanted it was found in the fact that in Northern Ireland, or Ulster, six counties still form part of the United Kingdom. This division is made on good Wilsonian principle of self-determination, for the inhabitants of this region are in the great majority Protestants and aggressive British loyalists. But the present rulers of Ireland cannot admit this right of self-government. To them it is a bleeding wound in the sacred body of Erin; Ireland to them is a unity which nothing must sever. So the German Minister remained in Dublin and the ports of Southern Ireland are denied to the Allied Navies, even to the Americans who have so often pleaded and aided the Irish national cause. How many allied seamen have lost their lives through this will never accurately be known. Throughout the war the people of England have accepted the Irish situation with the greatest calm. This is partly due to mere preoccupation with other events, but it is also partly due to a bad conscience about the past. When assistance is so often lacking from your friends it is foolish to expect it from your victims. Yet while Ireland as a state has remained aloof, many individuals from Southern Ireland have served in British Forces; some very brilliant pilots in the Royal Air Force have been Irish. There is no constitutional or juridical bar to this. Citizens of the Irish State are also subjects of the British Crown. They may travel with passports issued by the Irish Ministry of External Affairs and printed in three languages, Irish, French, and English, but if they can prove their loyalty they can be accepted for the British Armed forces.

NOTE ON THE POPULATION OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The facts about the population of the British Empire and Commonwealth are not very well known abroad, and even Englishmen are often not very clear on the subject. The following table may be of assistance to readers. It is made in three divisions.

First of all the free, self-governing nations of British or European stock. (In recent years the term British Commonwealth of nations has been used to denote this part of the Empire.) Second, the "Crown Colonies", these vary in size and importance and in the degree of self-government enjoyed, but they are all under the control of the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, much as the French Empire is ruled from Paris. They have no separate foreign policy. Third, the Indian Empire. Although prior to the war ministries responsible to the provincial legislatures had been set up in the Indian provinces, the Central government was under the control of the Viceroy and his Council at New Delhi. The Viceroy acts under the general direction of the Secretary of State for India in London, who is a member of the British Cabinet.

I. The United Kingdom.	47 millions.	England	38 millions	}	
		Wales	2½		"
		Scotland	5		"
		Northern Ireland	1½		"

Canada. 11 millions

Australia. 7 millions

South Africa. 2 millions European population. Native population 7 millions.

New Zealand. 1½ millions. TOTAL COMMONWEALTH.
75½ millions.

II. Crown Colonies. Estimated at about 80 millions.

III. India. 360 millions.

Figures adapted from *Whitaker's Almanac*, 1938.

When war finally broke out people in England were prepared morally for a *blitzkrieg* from the air. It was a tremendous relief to know that so large a part of the child population had been successfully evacuated from the industrial towns. In all parts of the country air-raid shelters had been prepared, and in the remotest parts of the country a dug-out in the back garden was a common spectacle. Everyone held their breath and waited for the crash. It did not come. This was the first great surprise of this war of bewildering surprises. People were as astonished as Samson might have been if after the breaking of the pillars of the temple of Dagon the roof and walls had not collapsed. Only a few penetrated the ideas of the Nazi war-makers. In the lobbies of the House of Commons the Labour member, Colonel Wedgwood,

always bold and original, offered a bet of £5 that no bomb would fall on London for six months. He had no difficulty in finding takers. But as the days passed and nothing catastrophic happened the public began to realize that a different ordeal was in store, ordeal by waiting. Both France and England had to witness with excruciating pain the conquest of Poland and with disquiet and alarm the unprecedented progress of modern German arms. By October it was clear that the whole German army would be free to move westwards. Everything therefore depended on the French army and on the amount of help which the British army and air force could give in that quarter. It was with great satisfaction that the public learned of the safe arrival of British divisions (numbers, of course, were never stated) on the French front. Moreover, it was gratifying to know that they had arrived unscathed by submarine or air attack. Another source of satisfaction was the arrangements for the high command. The British commander, Lord Gort, had been a first-class fighting soldier of the last war. He held that rare and valued distinction the Victoria Cross. But there was the problem of the united command. In this matter there was a universal desire to avoid the errors of the last war. There was in England the deepest respect for French generalship. Englishmen remembered Foch, and forgot Nivelle. Moreover, during the years of peace a great controversy had arisen over the quality of British generalship in the last war, and Mr. Lloyd George's criticism of Haig and other British generals had found acceptance outside conservative and military circles. The pacifists and anti-militarists of the Left, although rarely attentive students of military affairs, had gaily prejudged the controversy, often without reading it, against the generals. Any mud was good enough to throw at a general, and by throwing it at your own generals you not only aimed at the nearest target but showed a fine international spirit. In more responsible circles it was felt that unity of command was more than ever necessary in modern, swift-moving war, and the French army, with its more numerous cadres and larger formations, must in the nature of things be more capable of providing skilled direction. Accordingly, when it was known that General Gort was to serve under the supreme command of General Gamelin, the news was received not only with approval but with pleasure, and even perhaps relief.

In England, too, there was robust faith in the virtues of the Maginot line and of the defensive in general. It was anticipated

correctly that the blow would come through the less well defended Low Countries. In general there was great confidence in French military skill and the advantages of greater numbers of trained reservists that the French were presumed to possess. This was no vulgar notion in England. In April 1940, just before the storm broke, General Ironside, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had declared in a public speech that the French and British armies had an enormous superiority in trained officers, especially of the higher grades. And General Ironside was not only an able commander but a highly intellectual soldier whose writing on warfare had been studied with attention and respect by General von Blomberg.

None the less, Englishmen felt the most urgent need to bring the maximum help to France in men. Not all our trained forces were available, for the ever-present danger of Italy contained some very fine units in Egypt and the Middle East. Such forces as the Indian professional army could provide and the first contingents from Australia and New Zealand were drafted to the Egyptian frontier, with what effect we now know. But however much Englishmen desired to send troops to France the troops had to be armed and trained, and for this we were not ready on a sufficient scale. The fact remained that a nation whose population had not been trained for military service *en masse* could not produce the forces necessary without delay. In May 1939 the Military Service Bill had begun the work of calling up the younger age groups. On the day on which the war was declared another bill received the royal assent. This raised the age of compulsory military service to forty-one, which provided for man-power needs for a long time to come.

But in the nature of things during the first six months of the war Englishmen had an uneasy feeling of being under-employed in the military sense. It is true that two millions stood ready as civil defence workers and air-wardens, as firemen and first-aid parties. But there were no bombs to deal with, no fires to extinguish, no wounded to succour. Another great organization was rapidly being built up, the Royal Observer Corps, which was to track the course of enemy air-craft. Already, well before the war, the Royal Air Force intelligence and reconnaissance system was sufficient to make a surprise Pearl Harbour attack on the British Fleet unlikely to succeed, which is probably the only reason why it was not attempted. But after war broke out an immense system of

observation posts was established throughout the country, manned mostly by volunteers in their spare time. It was indispensable to the winning of the Battle of Britain in 1940. But all this was little noticed at the time, and the feeling of being insufficiently active compared with a fully mobilized country like France persisted.

The contrast between the two countries was most noticeable perhaps in the universities. As the Government in England had more men available than could be trained and armed at the moment it was quite sensibly decided to carry on the work of the universities. The calling-up age was twenty and a slight postponement was allowed to those whose examinations were due. The senior students, it is true, rapidly and in large numbers, presented themselves as candidates for training for commissioned rank in the three services according to their inclinations and capacities. But the matriculands for the most part proceeded to the universities as in peace time. It was good sense but a little uncomfortable. "*Cedant arma togae*," the cynics observed. The position of students was revealed in an incident trivial in itself but significant. The annual boat race between Oxford and Cambridge was due to take place in March, that athletic contest which has come to enjoy such astounding publicity. Was it to take place as usual? Common sense said yes. There were still plenty of students and the splendid exercise and discipline of rowing was good physical training. Besides, it only involved eighteen men. A compromise was arranged. The usual race on the Thames in London was abandoned, but a shorter race was held farther up the river in the sylvan shades of Henley, where no excited crowds would gather. None the less there was criticism and in Oxford Colleges many elderly scholars were heard to mutter, "What will the French think of it all?"

"What will the French think of it?" This was a common question in England in these days. It may be said that it was a strange question, for in these months the strain of the war was taken primarily by the British. After the first tentative operations near Saarbrücken had died down, the sea and air warfare was primarily a British activity. The first victims of war in the West were British and American civilians, women and children in the liner *Athenia*, which was torpedoed in the Atlantic in the first few hours of the war. The first blow struck from the air against Germany was the raid in daylight on Wilhelmshaven and Brunsbüttel, in which a German battle-cruiser was seriously damaged at the expense of heavy British losses. The aircraft-carrier *Glorious* was

sunk on September 18th with the loss of hundreds of men. Later, on October 14th, came the loss of the battleship *Royal Oak* in the anchorage of Scapa Flow, with 800 men drowned. When a battleship goes down with its crew it is equal to the annihilation of more than an infantry battalion, and in the case of naval personnel the loss is much more difficult to replace in terms of skill and training. M. Daladier took occasion to remind discontented critics in France of these solemn truths. Later came the magnetic mines, perhaps the famous secret weapon of which Hitler had boasted. They were indeed a terrible threat. They could be sown from aircraft by night in the approaches to any of our harbours or in the open sea. They could destroy without warning the mine-sweepers on which the Admiralty relied to keep the sea clear. A boat had only to pass over the mine and the magnetic attraction of the ship's steel hull detonated the charge. Englishmen were deeply disquieted.¹ The threat to France was equally grave, although the Germans took care that British ports at first had a monopoly of this new terror.

It was overcome. As an emergency measure wooden craft were employed to sweep for the new mines and aircraft also were adapted. All steel seafaring vessels were equipped with degaussing cables which rendered them immune. Bold and skilful technicians of the Royal Navy dissected a captured mine and revealed its secrets.

In the air across the waters of the North Sea there was some fighting. It soon became apparent that in daylight unescorted bombers could not safely be employed on the enemy coast. The British had to abandon their attacks on the German coast. The Germans, after an experiment against the British base in the Firth of Forth and other desultory attacks on Scotland, abandoned serious attacks. A powerful British naval squadron was found by German bombers in the North Sea but the attack was beaten off, although a near miss on the aircraft-carrier *Ark Royal* was the first occasion on which the German radio sank that famous vessel, two years before her honourable service came to an end. British submarines also were active and daring, and two German cruisers were torpedoed not very far from the German coast. But on land on the Continent air warfare of an offensive kind was not engaged

¹ In 4 days of November 1939, fifteen merchant ships and a destroyer were sunk; November 21, shipping in Thames and Humber completely held up. (H.M. Minesweeper, *gd.*, published May 1943.)

in by either side. This, we know, was a decision of the French High Command, who calculated that as the strength of the rival forces then stood it would not be prudent to begin a bombing offensive. Many officers of the Royal Air Force, which never lacked an offensive spirit, were disappointed at this decision at a time when they still had bases on the Continent from which they could have attacked centres of Nazi war industry with a full bomb-load in a minimum journey.

Since the war during this period was primarily a naval war, it was natural that the power of the French Navy should have received attention in the public mind. It is worth dwelling on this question because the French Navy after the armistice became the bitterest source of suspicion and friction between the two countries. The attitude of Englishmen to foreign navies is peculiar. If anything remains of the pride which was supposed to be a dominant English characteristic, it lies in their attitude to naval affairs. Professor D. W. Brogan (*The English People*, Hamish Hamilton, 1943, p. 212) sums the matter up for us.

"There is one permanent exception to English irony, resignation, indifference, or whatever you like to call it. Ships and the sea, and above all the Royal Navy, are exempted from this complacency. In the last war, as in this, it was the naval disasters or failures that astounded and angered the man in the street – and almost everyone lives in this street. It is not merely that Britain is an island, that the sea is all around and near at hand, that no one lives more than thirty or forty miles from tidal water, or that there are few fields that have never seen a seagull. It may be that because these are basic facts that the devotion to the Royal Navy is so deep and wide, but that devotion is a thing in itself.

"The military tradition is one of victory, but of victory by muddling through, of success won mainly by toughness, of not knowing when you are beaten, of applying horse sense. . . . Some of the most popular English soldiers have been not notably successful, but unsuccessful admirals do not become heroes, if only because the Englishman never remembers that there have been any. His picture of naval war in the past is a picture of endless victories."

With the exception of the Dutch Admiral Tromp, commemorated in a popular song, the great seamen who have won victories against Englishmen in the past are forgotten, de Ruyter, de Suffren, de Grasse. They remember with bitterness the part which the obstinacy of George III took in the loss of America, and

with generosity the achievements of General Washington. The French Admiral who gained command of the western Atlantic at the critical moment is scarcely even a name. It is less painful to the English to meditate a lost empire than a battle lost at sea. At the time, of course, we have to take our naval enemies seriously, and they have often, Dutch, French, Americans and Germans, been superior in many points of technique. But the navies of our allies are often neglected because of the monumental pride of British sea-power. Englishmen are indulgent to allies who under-rate British achievements on land. The small peace-time establishment maintained by England is an excuse for them. The military weakness of England at the beginning of a war is a legitimate ground of complaint to her allies, just as her military strength at the end of the war is pardonably resented by her defeated enemies. The volume of the National History of France which covers the Third Republic can deal with the war of 1914 with only one reference to a British General, Haig; it can refer to the Battle of the Somme merely as "a French offensive" and omit the names, Ypres, Arras, Messines, Paschendaele, St. Quentin; the great victories of 1918 can be described without any reference to that great British military invention, the tank. No offence is taken. If therefore the navies of Britain's allies are not treated with full respect it is the other side of the medal. It must be remembered that it was not until America was at war in December 1941 that Great Britain had ever fought with an ally equal to her in naval strength.

None the less there was in 1939-40 a lively interest in the new French Navy. It was understood to be a much better planned and integrated force than the fleet of 1914. The anti-submarine successes of the destroyer *Sirocco* received much publicity, but most interest was taken in the battle-cruisers *Strasbourg* and *Dunkerque*. The naval treaties of 1921 and 1930 had left England with a sufficiency of battleships, but they were slow. When the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* escaped out into the open our shipping was seriously menaced. It is said that by the sinking of one large ship laden with butter the *Graf Spee* brought about a reduction in the butter ration of the whole country, an eloquent commentary on England's alimentary problems. With some dismay it was realized that there were only five ships afloat capable of overhauling the German raider and fighting it with guns of greater calibre. These were the three British battle-cruisers, *Hood*,

Repulse and *Renown*, and the two French ships. The latter had been constructed specially to be a match for the German pocket-battleships, and French forethought was much admired. It was with immense pleasure that the British public learned that the *Strasbourg* and *Dunkerque* were helping to guard our Atlantic convoys, and on one fine winter day the shores of the Clyde were thronged with exultant Scotsmen watching a splendid Franco-British Armada steaming up their beautiful estuary with the first contingent of the Canadian Army. If only, people thought, the *Graf Spee* could come for thirty minutes under the fire of the *Dunkerque*!

The sequel, however, was startling and excited British naval pride to a high degree. It did not fall to the giant ships of either navy to sink the dangerous raider. On December 13th Commodore Harwood overtook her off the coast of Uruguay. He had one eight-inch gun cruiser, the *Exeter*, and two six-inch gun cruisers, the *Ajax* and the *Achilles*. These were just such ships as the German designers had planned to be able to destroy. The six eleven-inch guns of the *Graf Spee* should have sufficed to destroy them one by one, and her secondary armament of 5.9-inch guns was a powerful supplement. But by skilled use of smoke screen, by daring and persistent attacks from many quarters, Commodore Harwood won the victory. The *Exeter*, gravely damaged, fell out, but the two smaller ships persisted. Damaged, and with many dead on board, Captain Müller, the German commander, sought shelter in Montevideo, where his shell-marked ship was under the gaze of the curious and unfriendly Uruguayans. Then followed the astonishing climax. Putting to sea again with only, as it happened, the *Ajax* and the *Achilles* to face him, he scuttled his great ship and went into internment in the Argentine and took his own life. As a practical demonstration of bold and versatile use of smaller craft this engagement was of great significance. The moral effect was even greater. It revealed to the whole world that the fighting spirit of the British Navy was as high as ever. Captain Müller had some captured British merchant seamen on board his ship during the action. He released them in Montevideo with the courtesy of a gallant officer. Reflecting on the action just concluded, he observed, "You British are hard." The words were prophetic. The impression of softness which the British so often give in time of peace by their pacific demeanour and, in the twentieth century, their own vocal self-criticism, began to be dis-

sipated. In their due time, von Milch and Goering, Graziani and Bergonzoli, Rommel and von Arnim were to find that the British, contrary to expectation, "were hard". The French press was generous in its praise of the victory, the Americans were deeply impressed; even the English, perhaps for the first time in this war, felt inclined to congratulate themselves.

In the actual field of operations by land, air, and sea it was not difficult for Englishmen and Frenchmen to know what the other was doing. It was clear that the principal activity was by air and sea, and was in the main conducted by the British. But it was well understood in England that when the campaign in the West began in earnest the blow that must fall on France would outweigh anything that could fall on England. Hitler might turn his air-force against England, but on France he could turn both air-force and army as well, shells as well as bombs. Thus while the public wondered at the lull on land, the American journalists' expression, "the phoney war", roused more irritation against America than suspicion of France. In the political sphere the two countries knew and understood less about each other. Both were governed by the statesmen who had accepted the surrender of Munich. Whatever reinforcements there might be to the Cabinet, the presidency and the portfolio of foreign affairs were held by Chamberlain and Halifax, after September 13th, Daladier held both in France. The witch-hunters of the Left might still be on the alert for fascist influences and hidden hands. But the Left had had much wind taken out of its sails by the equivocal behaviour of Moscow.

There was, however, one important difference between the two countries. In Great Britain there was of course a censorship, but it was much less than in France a political censorship. The Communist party in Great Britain was a very small body compared to that of France. In France Communist town councils were suspended. In Great Britain there were no Communist councils to suspend. It counted only one Member of Parliament, Mr. Gallacher, elected by the miners of the county of Fife in Scotland. Only three Communists had ever been elected to the Commons, and never more than one at a time. It was far from being either a great or a national party. Its one daily paper, the *Daily Worker*, was small, and the Government gave it long rope. It was not suppressed until January 1941. Its attempts to sap the war effort by speaking of imperialist wars were weakened by its previous advocacy of a firm front against fascism. No paper was more

vigorous in its condemnation of Munich. But in France the Communists were numerous and powerful, a much more formidable rival for the official socialists, a much greater danger to the war-like activity of the state. Opinion in England tended to regard the French censorship along party lines. On the left it was regarded with anxiety and distrust, for the Left are the patrons of civil liberties. The British "Council of Civil Liberties" and the French "Ligue des Droits de l'Homme", are not Conservative organizations. The Right viewed the censorship with more complacency, and many Tories thought that we could do with more of it here.

Organized fascism also was weak in England. There was indeed an organization entitled "the British Union of Fascists" that was quite definitely pro-Nazi and tried to preach that England's declaration of war was a blunder and a crime. Its leader, Sir Oswald Mosley was a man of account. He had served for twelve years in Parliament, although he was without a seat in 1939. He had been a Labour Minister under Macdonald but had abandoned the Labour party. A restless, arrogant and ambitious man, unwilling to serve with equals or to be subordinate to others, he had at one time made some impression. But in the circumstances of the nineteen-thirties to be a fascist in England was to be anti-national, and this meant giving up a large part of the stock-in-trade of fascism. Moreover, although at various times there was much foreboding of social anarchy, it had never come to pass. There had been no riots, no violent *émeutes*, not even the seizing of factories. The deep internal peace which has been for long one of the great qualities and the great blessings of England had prevented those clashes which fascists must either discover or invent. Streets which are never stained with blood are poor soil for fascist seed. Nor had Mosley any henchmen of any political or intellectual stature. Some discontented intellectuals had rallied to his banner, but they were of no great account and of very heterogeneous origins. Anti-Jewish feeling in England always exists, but it was weak, and the war of 1939 was not easy to impute to Jewish financiers, although the attempt was made. In May 1940, when the power of the fifth column in Norway and Holland had been revealed, the Government struck hard at the fascists, and Mosley was interned. With him went a miscellaneous crew, one M.P., the scion of a Scottish noble house, an elderly admiral, an English squire and amateur savant, some obscurer men, mechanics, barbers, etc.

Outside the official fascists were some German apologists, academic men who had become specialists in denouncing the Peace Settlement as the "crime of Versailles", and had never been able to slip the clutch into reverse. No action was needed against them, but the distaste of their neighbours was a mild and effective restraint on their exuberance. The case of one who came to realize that the people of his district were referring to him as "him as likes 'Hler" is a good specimen.

The actual ministry in Great Britain remained Conservative. It was strengthened by the immediate inclusion of the three statesmen whom Hitler had anathematized as war-mongers in his famous Saarbrücken speech in October 1938 - Duff-Cooper, Eden and Churchill. But the Labour party for the time being remained outside, as did also the small Liberal party under Sir Archibald Sinclair. To many this seemed unfortunate, but it did not betoken any serious breach in national unity and it had its advantages when Chamberlain fell discredited in 1940. It was possible then to form a new great ministry on a national basis, which was much more inspiring to the public than a mere reshuffle.

While in public the two nations exchanged compliments in the radio and the press, and descriptions were published of the camaraderie of the armies, very little was known about the real state of public feeling. Except for those who were travelling on official business there was little coming and going. Afterwards English people remembered hints they had heard to the effect that the French had not their heart in the war. These were exaggerated as much in retrospect as they had been minimized or rejected at the time. It was learned, for instance, that in Paris the black-out was less rigorous and the life of the city more normal than in London. "How sensible", said people at the time, "how sinister, they reflected afterwards. It was said that the French had taken the war grimly and quietly without fanfares and flag-waving, but this was the mood of England also. It was said that the old enthusiasm of the *entente cordiale* of 1914 was absent in the demeanour of the French towards our forces. Still, even a very stupid Englishman could understand in 1939 that as a spectacle the presence of British army camps in Northern France must have lost, to put it mildly, the charm of novelty. Great efforts were made to make our participation in the European continent seem a reality to the French. The English author, Mr. Somerset Maugham, has since described how the British authorities were told that our troops

were arriving too secretly and that they should show themselves in Paris and not merely be switched round on the circular railway. Accordingly a battalion of the Guards was ordered to march with its band through the city. The band played the lively cockney song, "The Lambeth Walk", but it did not make a good impression. It sounded frivolous. One could remember that in 1914 no objection was taken to "Tipperary" because it was not a serious piece of music. But in England it was not generally known what tune the Guards had played nor what had been thought of it.

The fact was that both countries realized that the initiative lay with the enemy. That is a demoralizing factor for any army or any belligerent nation. And while the western front slumbered, public attention was diverted far away to the north by two very disquieting episodes, Finland and Norway.

III

WAR IN THE NORTH AND WEST

WHILE the conquest of Poland had left the Allies to face an attack in the west at such time as the enemy might choose, the public in England and France were distracted and alarmed by events in Finland and Norway. The sudden assault by the Russians on Finland presented France and England, as the leading League Powers, with an acute moral and military problem. They could not approve of the Russian attack without denying the grounds on which they had resisted Germany's attack on Poland. On the other hand to court the hostility of Russia was, so far as one could see, to invite the hostility of the whole length of the land mass of the Old Hemisphere from Vladivostock to Cologne. It was an absurd act of quixotry to court such dangers. Yet the Russian policy did shock the peoples of the west, and in America condemnation was severe. The Argentine Republic, most distant of all nations in the world from Finland, took the lead in demanding the expulsion of Russia from the League. The United States, not being in the League, was debarred even from this somewhat abstract mode of action, but American opinion strongly favoured the Finnish cause, and ex-President Hoover gave his patronage to a fund for red cross relief. The British and French Governments agreed to support the exclusion of Russia from the League but went no further than that. Their envoys remained in Moscow. The Finns, however, demanded practical help. It was not enough for them to have the bandages to bind up their wounds, they required arms with which to inflict wounds on their enemies. These they expected to receive from England and France, who had few enough to spare. The Baltic was closed and the arms could only be sent to Finland via the Norwegian port of Narvik and the Swedish railway system. When Sweden refused, for fear of German pressure, no practical means were left. Germany, which alone had a sufficiency of arms and the means of transport, stood aside cynically. The Germans had to accept, without a blow struck, the extension of the Russian frontier westward to beyond Viborg, and the installing of the Russian Navy in the port of Hangö in the Gulf of Finland. These

were quite perceptible material and strategic losses. On the other hand they gained much in the bitterness of the Finnish people and their willingness to have their revenge on Russia in due course. The gallant fight made by the Finnish army made it appear that this nation of only three million people was an ally worth having.

By suffering Finland to be conquered by Russia it might seem that Hitler had lost prestige. Yet it is doubtful if he did so. His reputation for consistency and for morality did, if possible, drop even lower, but this was not what he was concerned about. His immediate aim was to spread lack of confidence in England and France in countries that wished them well, and to sow internal dissension in England and France. Here the Finnish affair served his purpose well. The futility of invoking help from the Western Powers anywhere within the influence of German arms was admirably demonstrated. Allied prestige, both moral and material, dropped appreciably in America. On the other hand, the Finnish crisis illustrated very clearly the purely platonic nature of American sentiment towards Europe at that juncture. When Finland at last surrendered, an American Congressman was reported as dismissing all Europe with the remark, "They are all a lot of crooks, anyhow." This was just the impression that the Nazis desired to create. Even more valuable to the Nazis was the impression made in Europe that nothing more formidable than good wishes, moral judgments and medical aid would come from the New World to stay the Germans in their course.

Within England and France the Finnish war provided a lively source of dispute within the Leftist parties. Some of the more ardent Socialists and Communists took the part of Moscow from the first and could see nothing wrong in the Finnish war. In the absence of other serious war news the controversy was bitterly debated. Yet the general sentiment of the French and English peoples remained fairly well united. Soon much greater events drove thoughts of the Finnish episode out of people's minds. At all times in politics it is difficult for the average citizen to remember the perplexing and shifting events which pass before him. In war-time this is particularly evident. It had always been one of the methods of Nazi politics to count on this amnesia of the peoples. It enabled Hitler on many occasions to surprise his opponents by suddenly moving on a course which in the light of past events and past declarations seemed incredible. The Moscow pact was the supreme example of this. Englishmen and Frenchmen with their

more rational, consecutive, intellectually-responsible habits of thought in politics were often driven to wonder whether Germans had any memory left or whether they had become automata activated only by immediate stimuli. Perhaps in a sense they had become so. But if Hitler within his own domain could do great things by relying on the force of political oblivion, that same phenomenon worked against him if he ever hoped that memories of Finland would permit the British people to refuse the alliance of Russia when Hitler's attack on Russia at last made it possible. Too many terrible memories afflicted the public mind from the spring of 1910 onwards to permit them to remember Finland to their own undoing. After Rotterdam, who would remember Viborg? Indeed the Norwegian episode alone engulfed the Finnish. The Finnish war had made the English public familiar with the name of Narvik. It and many other Norwegian place names, known before only to a few tourists, were soon to become familiar to Englishmen and Frenchmen alike.

In the naval strategy of the war Norway had a place of great importance. Germany had only two exits for maritime trade. The first of these, the Channel, was firmly closed. Sea and air patrol from the coasts on both sides made it quite impossible for enemy ships to sail by that route. To the north there was the gap between the coast of Scotland and Norway. At its narrowest this is 260 miles. Aircraft could watch it, and it was so far from German air-bases that surface ships could safely lie in wait in northern waters. Great Britain and France disposed of ample resources in ships, even when large fleets were left in the Mediterranean to cover Italy. The blockade could not be completely effective in the long winter nights, but even then enemy ships which passed through incurred great danger and were likely to be caught in the end, like the battle-cruiser *Graf Spee*. But there was one weakness from the Allied point of view. By hugging the territorial waters of Norway German ships might escape attack, and very soon the British Admiralty discovered that the neutrality of Norwegian waters was not being respected. Norway herself, with only a few small war-ships, could do little to enforce control of her own coastal waters, enormous in extent and with innumerable channels. On February 2nd, 1940, a German armed merchant ship, the *Altmark*, bearing 300 prisoners from British merchantmen, was found lurking in a lonely fjord, and the British Government ordered a destroyer to attack. Placing his ship alongside, in the

old eighteenth-century manner, the British commander sent a boarding party armed with revolvers and cutlasses, and the prisoners were liberated. The German Government professed extreme irritation at this "brutal" act, and Norway formally protested, but everyone knew that it was a retaliation for persistent breaches of Norway's neutrality by Germany. Economically the most serious problem was the export of Swedish iron ore from the ice-free Norwegian port of Narvik. The Allied Governments decided to take action to prevent it. Accordingly the British Navy laid a mine-field at the entrance to Narvik Fjord which would force the enemy ships out into open water where they could be halted by allied warships.

That was on April 8th. Next morning the world learned that German forces had swept across the mainland of Denmark, taken Copenhagen, made their way up Oslo Fjord, occupied the Norwegian capital. The Danes submitted, the Norwegian Government retired northwards, ordered mobilization and accepted a state of war. This was terrible news but not in itself incredible, for the circumstances of naval and air war made it impossible for the British to control the distant waters of the Kattegat. But what did seem incredible was the news, and it was quickly proved to be true, that Bergen and Trondjem and even Narvik itself had been taken by German ships.

This was primarily a defeat and humiliation for Great Britain and for the Admiralty. The public felt that since a German descent on Scandinavia had been discussed in the press as a possible move, some effective measures should have been devised. Bergen or Trondjem or Narvik ought to have been protected by a British squadron. To the amateur strategist this was easy. But it was not easy to maintain fleets all the time so far from our bases. The nights were still long; they were moonless, the channels between the islands innumerable. Moreover, it was soon known that the Germans had used the stratagem of the wooden horse. Ships, apparently peaceful, had entered the harbours unsuspected, and in the ports were numbers of Norwegian traitors ready to help the enemy. A certain Major Quisling, soon to enjoy the peculiar infamy of having his name used as a generic name for all traitors, had prepared the surrender of Oslo. The Allies learned that this total war had to be conducted in an additional dimension, that of the omnipresent and impalpable Fifth Column.

After the first shock was over the Admiralty acted with charac-

teristic ençigy. Mincfields were laid, powerful naval forces bombarded the aerodrome of Stavanger. A small force of British destroyers entered the fjord by Narvik, and with the loss of two of the vessels inflicted heavy damage on a superior German force, the classic fight against superior odds which was in the high tradition of the fleet. Later, on April 13th, a more powerful force, with the great battleship *Wanspite*, sailed right up the fjord, and the nine enemy destroyers were sunk. In these naval operations the French fleet was also assigned a part. Afterwards there were charges by Admiral Darlan and his friends to the effect that the French fleet was ill-treated. These took two forms, one that the British Navy took the lion's share and relegated the French to humbler and less honourable duties. The other was that French ships were dangerously exposed to air attack and that protection promised by the Royal Air Force was not given. When all was over, however, it was found that the main burden of the casualties fell on Britain, and it was in the dockyard ports of Southern England - Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth - that beareavements were principally mourned.

Operations were also planned by the armies. In these the French were asked to co-operate. The operations were in two parts. The first, mainly British, was a landing north of Trondjem intended to recapture the port. It failed because the allies had no aerodrome and the German warships had command of the spacious waters of Trondjem Fjord. It was our first bitter lesson in fighting without air support. The second operation was successful. Mixed forces, including British, Polish, Norwegian units, with a powerful detachment from the French Foreign Legion and also Chasseurs Alpins, were landed around Narvik. British aircraft-carriers assisted the operations. These have been admirably described in a book published in French and English by the Deputy, M. René Lapie. In spite of good natural defences the port of Narvik was captured. The German garrison was being driven over the mountains almost into Sweden when the Allied High Command ordered the complete evacuation of Norway. By this time the war in France and the Low Countries had flared up and the risks and burdens of a campaign in northern Norway could no longer be borne. The King and Government of Norway were brought over in safety to England. The French Foreign Legion detachment returned also, later to do good work with the Fighting French and to occupy Galoon. The Chasseurs Alpins on their return to

Scotland achieved great local popularity among the people of Glasgow and elsewhere. One final disaster marred the evacuation. In a naval battle off the coast another of Great Britain's precious aircraft-carriers was lost with most of its crew.

The month which elapsed between April 10th and May 10th, 1940, was a period of frustration and disaster, but it was soon forgotten in the greater events which opened up in the west. It had one important political effect. Mr. Chamberlain was compelled to resign his office. Parliament was actually debating the Norwegian débâcle on the eve of the invasion of the Low Countries. A damaging case was made out against the Government, and more damaging still were the mere facts, however they might be excused. A majority still gave a vote of confidence, but it was so much reduced that it was clear that the House was reluctant to support him. Mr. Chamberlain had his defects as a statesman, but he was a man of sense and honour. He resigned at once (May 10th), and that evening he told the British people in a radio speech that the King had sent for Mr. Churchill. The Germans were overrunning Holland. British and French armies had crossed the Belgian frontier. Rotterdam airfield was in German hands. It was not a moment too soon for England to find her great leader for the war.

Winston Spencer Churchill, who kissed the hand of his sovereign as First Minister on May 10th, 1940, was a man of many parts. He was by birth an aristocrat, the grandson of a Duke of Marlborough, the direct descendant of the great Marlborough of the War of the Spanish Succession. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, had died prematurely after a brilliant political career, meteoric, unorthodox. He alone, amongst Conservatives of his day in Parliament, had boldly confronted and frequently discomfited the illustrious Gladstone. His son was to wage battles even more formidable. He was now sixty-four years of age. Educated at Harrow, the school of Peel and Palmerston, he had passed on to the military college at Sandhurst, the English St. Cyr. It is important to note this. Churchill began life as a professional soldier.¹ Although the world was then relatively peaceful he

¹ The present writer in 1931 met General von Blomberg at Königsberg and, in discussing military leaders, ventured to observe that if Churchill had remained a soldier till 1914, he might have been the English Marlborough of the last war. "That is quite possible," replied Blomberg thoughtfully. "On the other hand he might have been too unorthodox to be promoted General." Blomberg smiled broadly, "That is even more possible."

contrived to see much active service, two campaigns on the Indian frontier, a decoration won in each campaign. Then he was in the Sudan in 1898 and fought at the battle of Omdurman. When the South African War broke out in 1899, Churchill tied his hand as a war correspondent but was captured by the Boers. This did not deter him. He escaped and joined the British Army.

He saw hard service, was present at disasters like Spion Kop and triumphs like the entry into Pretoria. Then he turned to politics. He was elected to Parliament as a Conservative for the cotton town of Oldham. He also showed his form as a writer, and his biography of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was at once recognized as a masterpiece. Later he was to write his famous war book, *World Crisis* 1914-1918, and a brilliant life of his ancestor the great Duke. In 1906, having crossed over to the Liberal Party, he became a minister in the talented Liberal Government of Mr. Asquith. Except for a brief period of service in the field as a Colonel, he held office through the last war and afterwards. He served at the following ministries: the Colonial Office, the Board of Trade, the Home Office, the Admiralty, the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Ministry of Munitions, the War Office. Later, he became a Conservative again under Baldwin, and was Chancellor of the Exchequer for five years. No British Prime Minister in all history had had such varied experience. He had always made enemies. At various times and for different reasons he had been execrated by the Right and by the Left. He had enjoyed all the sweets of office and distinction except that of popularity. In the decade of the nineteen-thirties he had held a lonely and isolated position. Distrusted by the Left for his "militarism", and by the Right for his "pessimism" and his too fervent calls to action, his services had been lost to the nation until, on September 3rd, 1939, Mr. Chamberlain had sent him to the Admiralty, his old post of 1914. In the terrible crisis which called him to power in May all detraction was silent. As he was later grimly to observe, "there were few candidates for the position."

The mood in which the English people turned to Churchill at this moment had something almost feudal about it. It was a process of "commendation", the mood in which in some terrible extremity of the Dark Ages people placed their fortunes in the hands of a leader, when he became their "lord" and they became his "men". The transition from the diminished influence and political disinheritance in which Churchill had stood for the previous ten

years to almost unexampled authority is one of the most remarkable in British history. One is reminded of the lines of the poet, Gilbert Chesterton, describing Don John of Austria setting forth for the crusade of Lepanto.

"Where risen from a doubtful seat and half attained stall,
The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall."

It must not be thought, however, that England was accepting Churchill as a dictator. Opposition and criticism to him in Parliament and in public was always given expression. He himself claimed for his Government plenary powers such as had never been known before, but he remained a good democrat or, to express the conception more accurately, a *good constitutionalist*. When provoked by political enemies in Parliament he will fall upon them with ruthless energy. But towards the institution of Parliament his loyalty is unswerving. He will meet opposition with its own weapons, but to the House as a whole, to the Speaker, to the Commons as the Representative of the people, the grand inquest of the nation, he inclines with dutiful respect. The powers which he employs are legal powers, the support which he receives is a willing obedience.

One more point may be noted about Churchill. He is not a young man, nor is he the apostle of any new dispensation. Deep experience and long reflection on government have made him what he is. He was already a seasoned minister directing the movements of the British Navy when the present ruler of Germany was making his first unsuccessful essays with the brush, and the ruler of Italy was vapouring as an agitator of syndicalist pacifism. In their danger the people did not turn to some slick practitioner of novel ideologies or to some monstrous expression of the twentieth-century craze for the Superman. They preferred the older nineteenth-century vintage, rich, mellow, well-flavoured, thoroughly matured and strong. Such was the man whom England found as a leader and France as an ally in 1940. A parallel in French history is not easy to find. He was without the bitter destructiveness of Clemenceau, he had nothing whatever of the cold fanaticism of Robespierre, but much of the ardour and audacity of Danton with something of the organizing power of Carnot and the tribunician authority of Gambetta. But his is a more responsible and ethical character than Danton's, more truly political than Carnot's, less rigid and doctrinal than Gambetta's. If there is an analogy at all it

is perhaps with Mirabeau, the type of the liberal aristocrat, fervent and inspired. Conceive a Mirabeau, maturer and better controlled, enjoying the real confidence of Louis XVI and the willing support of the National Assembly, and there is some approximation to Churchill as England's governor in the crisis of this war.

By May 13th the new Ministry was formed. It was a thoroughly national Government. The Labour Party now consented to take office. Their leader, Attlee, became deputy Prime Minister; Mr. Morrison, the strong man of London socialism, went to Supply and later to the Home Office. The leading figure of English Trades Unionism went to the all-important Ministry of Labour. Another labour man, Alexander, went to the Admiralty, where he had served before in 1929. The Air Ministry was given to the Liberal leader, Sir Archibald Sinclair, who had been a professional soldier in the last war. Mr. Eden took the War Office. Lord Halifax remained in charge of Foreign Affairs, while Mr. Chamberlain himself gave his support to the Government by taking the office of Lord President of the Council, a post free from heavy administrative duties. The great Canadian journalist, Lord Beaverbrook, undertook to head a new ministry of aircraft-construction where swift unorthodox measures were urgently needed. On the whole the new Ministry brought in some younger, newer, and, in general, stronger men. There was virtually no opposition to the new Administration. By a recent law the conventional position of "Leader of His Majesty's Opposition" had been given legal status, with a salary attached. When the ministry met the House, the Speaker, whose duty it was to designate the leader of the Opposition, was unable to distinguish one from amongst the half-dozen eccentrics who were not supporters of Mr. Churchill.

The new Government gave the British people a sense of leadership and unity. Presenting himself to Parliament on May 13th, Mr. Churchill uttered his famous *mot d'ordre* for England at war.

"I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this Government: 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.' We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us: to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never sur-

passed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. 'That is our policy'

This sombre but stimulating note was needed for the occasion. From the very first day the campaign in the west seemed to outstrip the worst imaginings of the pessimists. Reliance had been placed on the Dutch water-defences. They were overleaped and broken through almost in a day. All that Britain could do was to cover the Dutch coast with naval craft, rescue the Queen and the Government and smash up numerous German aircraft beached on the shore. They were also able to perform that most odious and ungrateful of military tasks, to be repeated in France and finally in Singapore, of carrying out demolitions of our own or our Allies' ports and fortifications. By May 14th the Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch army was obliged to order the cease fire. Germany had gained in five days what in 1914 she had not dared to attempt. That very evening the British War Office called for the formation of the Home Guard. All that was left to comfort people in England was the splendid example of Queen Wilhelmina and her ministers. The motto of the House of Orange had been the brief device, "*Je maintiendrai*". It was the motto of one of England's greatest Kings, the Dutchman William III, who had presided over England's revolution in 1688.

After Holland, Belgium. The new and powerful fortifications of Liège proved unavailing. The Albert Canal, on which high hopes had been placed, was crossed and the Allied position outflanked. Brussels fell on the 17th, and on the 19th, St. Quentin. On the same day General Weygand succeeded General Gamelin. The full official history of the campaign in Belgium and Northern France has not been published, and owing to the speed at which events took place it will never be known with the same clarity as the campaign of 1914. But its main outlines are clear. The armies of the north, which were the forces mainly employed, were first of all outflanked from Holland and later from the south-east by the break-through at Sedan. Mr. Churchill, speaking in Parliament on June 4th, permitted himself to make a restrained comment on the French command.

"From the moment that the French defences at Sedan and on the Meuse were broken at the end of the second week of May, only a rapid retreat to Amiens and the south could have saved the British and French armies who had entered Belgium at the appeal

of the Belgian King; but this strategic fact was not immediately realized. The French High Command hoped they would be able to close the gap, and the armies of the north were under their orders."

This delay, excusable perhaps but fatal, led to the German rush to the sea and to the fall of Abbeville on the 21st, Boulogne on the 23rd. The German commander summoned Calais to surrender on the 24th, but it was held for four days by crack British regiments. Only thirty men were ever re-embarked. But time had been gained for Dunkirk.

The great drama of the beaches of Dunkirk has attracted the most attention, especially amongst the British public, who were thrilled by the naval aspect of the operation. But enough tribute has not been paid to the pure military feat of maintaining a perimeter front round Dunkirk after the surrender of the Belgian Army had uncovered the Allied left. Mr. Churchill, however, underlined this in his speech of June 4th.

It was an Anglo-French triumph. Lord Gort, the British Commander, and General de la Laurencie and Admiral Abrial had to bring their armies into a narrowing area clogged with transport and troops in broken formation, while maintaining a screen to hold off the advancing Germans. The port of Dunkirk became unusable for large vessels, and men had to embark on small boats from beaches under aerial bombardment and later long-range artillery fire. By May 29th the naval arrangements for evacuation were beginning to work well. One beach was allotted to the French troops and British vessels were detailed to embark them. Admiral Abrial lacked definite instructions from his Government as to embarkation, but on May 30th he agreed with Lord Gort that no other policy was possible. British and French were to share equally all facilities for evacuation. On June 1st the enemy attacked heavily on the British sector and forced the line back, but by nightfall on that day the advance was checked. During daylight on June 2nd no evacuation was possible, but the outskirts of Dunkirk were held throughout the day. At nightfall the remaining British troops had been taken on the boats. In all 224,000 British troops, of whom 13,000 were wounded, were embarked, with 112,000 Allied troops, mostly French.

What a remarkable military operation this was has been illustrated recently by the defeat and capture of General von Arnim's

army at Tunis. The Axis army, it must be admitted, had less prospect of a successful sea-crossing at the last. But they had a depth of front many times greater; they had organized bases at Bizerta and Tunis. They had a final bolt-hole at Cap Bon. They had room enough to hold good airfields. There were natural defences of mountain and rock. Yet what the Allies had succeeded in doing, the Axis failed to accomplish. The last British General to leave Dunkirk, after a tour in a motor-boat round the harbour to make sure that none of his men were left, was General Alexander, the victor of Tunisia.

It may appear a little strange to Frenchmen that Dunkirk, the last action of a thoroughly disastrous campaign, should have evoked such enthusiasm in England. Yet it saved, as Mr. Churchill declared recently, "the spinal column" of the British Army for subsequent tasks. Moreover, in British military history, less gilded with great land victories than that of France, such withdrawals to the sea are in a classic tradition. In the Peninsula at Corunna in 1808 the British general, Sir John Moore, had successfully embarked an army pursued by Napoleon in person. Some years earlier Sidney Smith had repelled Bonaparte from the Syrian port of Acre. There was more than historical satisfaction in the matter. The skill and gallantry of the naval units was of course taken for granted. But the evacuation had shown two other features. The first was the energy and zeal and power of improvisation which was displayed in assembling the hundreds of vessels necessary, from destroyers to pleasure steamers and yachts. Most significant of all was the battle in the air. Royal Air Force Fighter Command had its first fair chance of facing the enemy from a secure base and not in the confusion and shift of the retreat. A ratio of loss of four against one was often inflicted on the Luftwaffe, and the names of Hurricane and Spitfire became world-famous.

June 4th saw the end of the Battle of Dunkirk. On the next day the Germans attacked on the precariously stabilized front on the Somme and the Aisne. In England there was still confidence in the French military power. A counter-attack on the dangerously exposed German line was expected. Weygand would surely enact again the miracle of the Marne. It was difficult to forget the old pattern. In Oxford an elderly Professor of Classics was observing to the author: "Weygand will make his counter-attack, and afterwards we will give him an honorary Doctorate as we did to Foch."

But Fate had not destined Weygand for such academic garlands. On June 14th British listeners heard an ingeniously worded and anæsthetic bulletin from the B.B.C. which conveyed to their slightly dazed intelligence the awful fact that Paris was in German hands. Only the previous day the British Government had promised France all the aid in its power and renewed its guarantee to continue the war. Since June 10th it had meant war against Italy as well. British military support for France was never relaxed. Although the army saved from Dunkirk had lost its arms and was in process of reorganization, troops were sent to Brittany. Canadian soldiers were sent there with full equipment which fortunately they were able later to bring back. Until the fighting ceased in France the British troops were still there, ready to continue. Considering the military weakness of England against invasion, it was imprudent, almost quixotic, but Churchill had given the word of the Government and was determined to honour it to the end. Slowly the public realized the gravity of the situation. On the evening of Sunday, June 16th, the news from France, given by the B.B.C., had a desperate ring about it. Next morning at eight o'clock it was announced that M. Reynaud had resigned Marshal Pétain, it was declared, had succeeded him. People were still naïve enough to think that this appeal to the Marshal of France, the hero of Verdun, was an *ultima ratio* of valiant defence. These illusions lasted until one o'clock. The mid-day bulletin gave the news that the new French Government had asked for an armistice. Every military assumption on which the war had been engaged had now been falsified, on land, air and sea. The country was stunned. That evening at nine Mr. Churchill came to the microphone. He limited himself to a hundred words.

"The news from France is very bad and I grieve for the gallant French people who have fallen into this terrible misfortune. Nothing will alter our feelings towards them or our faith that the genius of France will rise again. What has happened in France makes no difference to our actions and purpose. We have become the sole champions now in arms to defend the world cause. We shall do our best to be worthy of this high honour. We shall defend our island home and with the British Empire we shall fight on unconquerable until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brows of mankind. We are sure that in the end all will come right."

IV

THE SEPARATION

THE shock and pain felt in England by the fall of France was one of these great collective emotions concerning which since they defy analysis, one can only attest the magnitude. Churchill, speaking with great calm and magnanimity, warned the public against opening a quarrel between the past and the present and so compromising the future

"Let each man search his conscience and search his speeches. I frequently search mine."

No thinking Englishman could forbear to ask himself whether his country had done all that was possible to assist the French. Given the military power of Great Britain at the opening of the campaign in France it was fair to say that every possible effort had been made. (The judgments to be passed on the policies of Britain and France during the twenty years of peace are another and much more intricate question.) An army of 400,000 men had been sent to France, and this represented nearly the whole of the forces which we had been able to train and equip sufficiently by the spring of 1940. Most of these troops had been withdrawn via Dunkirk, but there remained three divisions fighting to the last in Normandy, and Canadian troops had been thrown in at the last moment. Powerful squadrons of the Royal Air Force had been sent to France and had suffered grave losses, whether in battle or by the destruction of the aerodromes. The Royal Navy had failed in no act of skill and daring in the face of enemy air attack. British bombers had continuously attacked the bridges and communications of the advancing German Army. British fighters had covered the evacuation on the northern coast. Part of the force reserved for the defence of the British Isles was thrown into this battle. No lack of energy, zeal and goodwill had been shown, and English Ministers, including Churchill himself, had never hesitated to visit France at the most critical moments. His last visit had been to see M. Reynaud at Tours, accompanied by Lords Beaverbrook and Halifax, on June 13th. On June 16th he was again about to leave, this time for Bordeaux, when he received the

news of Reynaud's resignation. At the very time of the surrender the First Lord of the Admiralty, the First Sea Lord and the Colonial Secretary were at Bordeaux."

Nor was it only military aid that was promised but the fullest political support. There was the famous offer of union, of common citizenship between the two countries, given as a guarantee of future solidarity. On June 16th the British Ambassador communicated to the French Government a draft declaration of an act of Union. This was the text.

"At this most fateful moment in the history of the modern world the Governments of the United Kingdom and the French Republic make this declaration of indissoluble union and unyielding resolution in their common defence of justice and freedom, against subjection to a system which reduces mankind to a life of robots and slaves

The two Governments declare that France and Britain shall no longer be two nations but one Franco-British Union. The constitution of the Union will provide for joint organs of defence, foreign, financial and economic policies. Every citizen of France will enjoy immediately citizenship of Great Britain and every British subject will become a citizen of France. Both countries will share responsibility for the repair of the devastation of war, wherever it occurs in their territories, and the resources of both shall be equally, and as one, applied to that purpose.

During the war there shall be a single war Cabinet and all the forces of Britain and France, whether on land, sea, or in the air, will be placed under its direction. It will govern from wherever it best can. The two Parliaments will be formally associated. The nations of the British Empire are already forming new armies. France will still keep her available forces in the field, on the sea and in the air.

The Union appeals to the United States to fortify the economic resources of the Allies and to bring her powerful material aid to the common cause. The Union will concentrate its whole energy against the power of the common enemy, no matter where the battle may be. And thus we shall conquer."

This remarkable document expressed the utmost resolution on the part of Great Britain and the utmost confidence in France. It could not have gone further. Necessarily it was only the briefest statement; it left numerous juridical points for settlement, but

June 16th, 1940, was not a time for juridical niceties. It bore immense possibilities for the future security and welfare of Western Europe. But the Government at Bordeaux, by a majority, was resolved on peace at all costs. It is interesting to note that the Pétain Government took the offer seriously enough to give it the very minimum of publicity instead of launching a campaign against it. The British press published it on June 18th. On June 22nd it was published in France in a brief *Havas* communiqué, and the *Temps* made the comment that the offer was already out of date when it was presented. Occasional references have since been made to it by Doriot and others, treating it dishonestly as a plot to reduce France to the status of a British Dominion.

This was an absurd supposition. The equality of populations between the two countries would in itself have prevented France from being subordinate, quite apart from the English respect for so great a nation and so illustrious a history. There is no real parallel for the proposal in modern history, the union of Poland and Lithuania is too distant and too dissimilar. In British history the only approximate analogy is the Union between Scotland and England in 1707, but this is inapt because in that case England had a vast superiority in wealth and numbers and military power. None the less the parallel as far as it goes is encouraging, for the Scots have enjoyed a perfect equality within the union and have succeeded in obtaining by their own merits positions of dignity, influence and emolument more than proportionate to their numbers. Nor would the French be joining a community which was completely English-speaking. Three million of the people of Canada speak French.

Although the surrender of France was calculated to induce disillusion and fear in England, it is probably true to say that at first the dominant emotion was sympathy. This, at any rate, was the impression of one Frenchman in England at the time, who wrote later in the review, *La France Libre* "Never has France been so purely loved as at that time." In the hour of France's disaster all that she represented in European civilization stood out with a wonderful clarity. That such a land and such a people should have to endure total conquest by Germans and Nazis was in itself pure tragedy. In times of peace Englishmen may veer from one side to another in their appreciation of the merits of French and German learning and culture, but it is only a question of degree. The greatness of French achievement in literature and art, in

learning and in science, is never questioned. It is the Englishman's eternal dream to see both France and Germany at peace, the enlightenment of France and the learning of Germany playing their full and equal part in European life. If German culture is sometimes overrated, if too much hope is placed in the good, the liberal, the cultured Germans who prove such broken reeds, this does not diminish the respect felt for France. Moreover, it must be remembered that to most Englishmen of the educated and middle classes the face, if not the heart, of France is very familiar. French is the language that most of them know best, France is the country to which they most frequently travel, through which they travel to fare farther afield, the key and the gateway of Europe. German soldiers in the Champs Elysées, German soldiers in Boulogne and Bordeaux, German soldiers at Chartres, at Rouen, at Nantes, this meant great and immediate peril to Englishmen, but first of all it meant pain and an almost personal sense of humiliation. The lights are going out all over Europe, Sir Edward Grey had cried in August 1914. The light had gone out of Europe, Englishmen felt in June 1940.

When, however, there was time to reflect on the catastrophe, when it became evident that the government set up in Vichy was not merely subject but abject, not merely sorrowful in disaster but hostile and malicious to France's ally, then bitterness began to arise. That there was cause for bitterness can scarcely be denied. Yet it can reasonably be affirmed that most Englishmen were somewhat obtuse and uncomprehending in their attitude to France. Englishmen do not understand defeat, for they have never experienced it at home. The great wars which they have waged in modern times, entering usually too late, always imperfectly prepared, have been victorious wars. The English plenipotentiaries have held the best cards at the tables of the peace conferences. The disputes which were carried on about the final Treaty, in Parliament at the time and in the history classroom thereafter, have been disputes about how well or ill the victory was used, had our enemies been sufficiently humbled, had they been too severely treated? The peace was a matter of hot discussion, the victory taken for granted.

Great Britain in its present form came into existence in 1707 with the final union between England and Scotland. That was one year after the battle of Ramillies and the year before Oudenarde. The illustrious Marlborough was then at the height of his

power and success. If he did not complete the war by a march on Paris it was because of political changes at home which swept him from power and brought the pro-French Tory party into office. The war of the Austrian succession, 1740-48, ended in the indecisive peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. Its sequel, the seven years' war, ended in 1763 after some of the most splendid victories in British annals. Then came a period of misfortune, the war of American Independence. England then had to admit defeat. But this war was in its origin and essence a civil war between Englishmen in the colonies and Englishmen at home. The Government of King George III has been bitterly blamed, not so much for its misconduct of the war but for permitting it to occur. There was disagreement at home on the rights of the war, and a minority sympathized with the colonies. In clubs and taverns excited Whigs toasted the arms of General Washington. It brought us the hostility of France, Spain and Holland, and a kind of blockade or war of economic sanctions with Russia and the Scandinavian powers. Yet in the European theatre Great Britain survived. The danger was acute, our naval power in home waters was threatened, there was grave danger of invasion. But the danger passed, and in 1783 the peace left Canada and India still in British hands. Only to the United States was there a complete surrender. This one defeat has perhaps never been taken seriously enough by Englishmen; it is regarded as the exception that proves the rule.

The struggle with the French Revolution and with Napoleon lasted for over twenty years and was filled with alarming vicissitudes. But it ended in a total victory. A century later England was again called upon to fight in a war of national survival, and again after being on the verge of disaster there was the same happy ending. Thus has grown up the legend of the last battle which England always wins. In respect of any one war it has no basis in reason except this, that a nation which cannot conceive of defeat has certain resources in morale which will help it in the worst extremity, *possunt quia posse videntur*.

But if the spectacle of the enemy occupying your country, striding insolently down the streets of your capital, is inconceivable because it has never been known, this consequence arises, that you cannot adequately picture the emotions and mentality of those who through defeat have come to permit such humiliations. The bare, hard facts of military defeat are not fully

understood; that when the army is split up and overwhelmed, when the enemy are in possession of the vital centres of government and wealth, a people must abandon armed resistance; these truths are well known to the citizens of the thirteen Southern American States defeated in the civil war. They had been experienced within living memory by Frenchmen and more recently by Germans. Englishmen knew them only at second hand. To say all this is not to excuse the English attitude which made them hard critics of France, but to explain it. "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner," is a maxim valid in its fullness only in Heaven. But to try to understand is a large part of wisdom; if the English attitude to defeat must be in part imputed to stupidity, some part must also be imputed to inexperience.

There were other things which Englishmen could remind themselves about at this time. A large part of the English public, in the nineteen-twenties and later, had denounced French "militarism." The withdrawal of the Allied troops from the Rhine in the days of the Weimar Republic had been hailed with delight as a gesture of reconciliation. There was much more to be said for this than for the later appeasement in the face of threats from Nazi Germany, but the uneasiness of many Frenchmen at this reduction of the stipulated fifteen years of occupation was dismissed much too lightly by English observers. Night after night in the summer of 1940 British Airmen lost their lives over the Ruhr. Once, under Poincaré, the French had been in possession, admittedly for economic rather than military reasons. But until the Treaty of Locarno was violated, and the Rhineland occupied in 1936, the heart of industrial Germany stood open to attack. These were bitter reflections, and since then the people of England have paid heavily for their refusal to understand the French point of view. But these were days when there was little leisure for reflection on the past; the urgent dangers of the present pressed too closely on people's minds.

With the surrender of France one question was in every Englishman's thoughts. What will happen to the French Navy? It was the fourth most powerful fleet in the world and, after the British, the most powerful in Europe. The maintenance of communications in the Mediterranean depended on French ships and bases. On the Atlantic the Germans had acquired bases on the western coast from Narvik to Bordeaux. With only the German ports as bases her air and undersea attacks on British shipping could be

contained and kept within reasonable limits. It seemed doubtful whether, without the help of the French, the approaches to Britain could be adequately guarded. It was hoped that the French Navy or the greater part of it could come over to our side. There were two degrees in this hopeful expectation. The French ships might come and continue the fight manned by their own crews, or they might be left in our ports, the crews being repatriated. Behind these hopes lay the fear that the ships might pass into enemy hands. If this happened, and if in due course the enemy could man and use them in battle, then it would mean that Great Britain would lose the war. With regard to the use of the French ships by the Allies it is of course true that they could not have anything like their full value separated from their own arsenals, workshops and ports. If the French Empire had continued the struggle there would have been some bases left, notably Bizerta, but even then the major armament factories with all their necessary machine tools would have been in German possession in Metropolitan France. None the less if the French Navy had come to British harbours before the surrender, British industry might have been able to make a great effort to provide in due course the ammunition and the spare parts for engine-room and electrical equipment to keep the most valuable of the French ships in action. Even if we had not the personnel to man all these ships, the most valuable of them could have been used. The *Richelieu* and the *Jean Bart* when fitted out were vastly superior to the British *Royal Sovereign* class, built during the last war. To take one example, the British battle-cruiser *Hood*, completed in 1920, was sunk in May 1941 by a salvo from the *Bismarck*, with the loss of 1,400 men. Had these men manned the more modern, better protected *Richelieu*, they might well have survived and sunk the *Bismarck* then and there. The *Dunkerque* and the *Strasbourg* were admirable vessels, without their like in the British Fleet. The British Navy was desperately short of aircraft-carriers. France had two, which might in time have been invaluable. As for the destroyers the situation was desperate. They had been lost by mine and torpedo, they had been lost by bombing of the coast of Norway. Off Dunkirk more had been sunk or damaged, and British repairing yards were full of destroyers. The labour required to repair them was a serious loss to ship construction.

That the French sailors should have been unwilling to fight their ships after the surrender is not surprising. The official

British account of the war in the Eastern Mediterranean states. "It gradually became evident that the French sailors had only one unifying impulse, to return to their home ports" (*East of Malta*, p. 13). What was surprising and disappointing, perhaps more to civilians than sailors, was the reluctance of the French officers to let anyone else use their ships. This was shown at Alexandria, where all that Admiral Cunningham, facing the Italian Navy with inferior forces, could obtain from Admiral Godfroi, was an agreement by which the French men-of-war in that port were demilitarized by their own crews, most of whom were subsequently repatriated. On hearing of this, people in England could not forget that there were other Allies, Polish, Norwegian and Dutch, whose naval men had come to England and were giving valuable service, sometimes in their own ships, sometimes in British ships or in the American destroyers that were brought into service.

It is useless to pretend that there was not bitterness in England on this subject. There was and is. (This may be said with all due consideration for the hard dilemma in which the French sailors were placed and for whom the keenest sympathy was probably felt by the British officers.) For, again let it be repeated, the whole population of Great Britain is vitally conscious of anything pertaining to security upon the sea. About all naval matters they are profoundly realistic. They have seen the whole continent of Europe arrayed against them, as after the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807, and they have not despaired. In blind faith they have fought on, uprooting the whole fabric of their life for the uncongenial purpose of making themselves great and strong on land. And thus they have done in all their great wars, and in due course victory has come to them, Blenheim, Minden, Waterloo, St. Quentin, El Alamein. But all this has hung on one thread, the maintenance of sea power. Lacking that, the people will starve and the armies will remain unformed. France will fall if hostile armies battle their way to Paris. There is no square mile of the surface of the sea that might not become the graveyard of the British Empire.

The problem of the French Navy was in Mr. Churchill's mind when he had his last interview with M. Reynaud at Tours on June 13th. The French Prime Minister asked whether the British Government would release the French from the undertaking not to conclude an armistice or a separate peace. Mr. Churchill's reply was as follows:

"I knew how great French sufferings were, and that we had not so far endured equal trials or made an equal contribution in the field, I felt bound to say that I could not give consent."

It was then agreed that M. Reynaud should appeal for help to President Roosevelt. On the 16th Mr. Churchill received a message from M. Reynaud from Bordeaux to the effect that the American response was not satisfactory. He asked once more for release from his undertaking. Mr. Churchill gave the substance of his reply as follows:

"Separate negotiations, whether for Armistice or peace, depend upon an agreement made by Britain with the French Republic and not with any particular French administration or statesman. They therefore involve the honour of France. However, in view of all they have suffered, and of the forces evidently working upon them, and provided that the French Fleet is despatched to British ports and remains there while the negotiations are conducted, His Majesty's Government will give their consent to the French Government asking what terms of armistice would be open to them. It was also made clear that His Majesty's Government were resolved to continue the war, altogether apart from French aid, and dissociated themselves from such inquiries about an Armistice."

That same evening there came the news of the fall of the French Government which deterred Mr. Churchill from making a journey to Bordeaux. He sent, however, a message pointing out that the despatch of the French Fleet to a British port was the indispensable condition for giving consent to an armistice. The first Lord of the Admiralty was sent to reinforce this message. Solemn assurances were given to him that the fleet would never be permitted to fall into German hands. It was therefore "*avec douleur et stupeur*" that Mr. Churchill read Article 8 of the terms of armistice. This stipulated that with the exception of certain ships left for the protection of the French Empire, the bulk of the French Fleet should be interned and disarmed under German and Italian control. It was true that the same article contained an assurance that Germany would not make use of these ships during the war. A promise by Hitler made little impression on the people of England in 1940. Moreover, it was possible that on some pretext the armistice might be denounced by Germany and entirely new conditions imposed.

It was in these circumstances that the British Government proceeded to the action which was taken on July 3rd, 1940, at Mers el Kebir.

In this North African port lay the two battle-cruisers *Strasbourg* and *Dunkerque*, and many other craft and submarines. They, at any rate, were under no immediate pressure from the Germans or Italians. Admiral Somerville, in command of the British Fleet in the Western Mediterranean, appeared with a powerful fleet off the port and sent a message to the French Admiral Gensoul. This presented three choices.

- (1) To join with the British and to continue the fight.
- (2) To sail with skeleton crews to a British port, the crews to be repatriated, the ships to be returned to France at the end of the war.
- (3) The ships to go to a port in the Antilles, such as Martinique, there to be demilitarized or perhaps entrusted to the United States.

If these conditions were not accepted, then the French Admiral was warned to sink his fleet to avoid the action which Admiral Somerville was under orders to execute.

Neither then nor since have the mass of the British people understood why Admiral Gensoul could not have accepted one of the courses offered to him, especially the third, which would have taken him to a French port in the new world. He could have pleaded *force majeure*, and *force majeure* from London seemed to Englishmen less humiliating than *force majeure* from Wiesbaden. Gensoul, however, considered it a matter of military pride and duty to resist, although the British forces, superior in fire power and manœuvrability and supported by the aircraft-carrier *Ark Royal*, could scarcely fail to destroy him. In the action which followed the old battleship *Bretagne* was sunk with heavy loss of life and one of the battle-cruisers was damaged and beached, and the other, escaping to Toulon, was struck by torpedoes on the voyage. This meant that the two battle-cruisers could not be operated by the enemy in any circumstances for a long time to come. The Admiralty could make its dispositions without having to reckon on that dangerous possibility. This was of cardinal importance when the issue of the war seemed to hang on a thread, and when the new, fast British battleships of the *King George V* class were not yet in commission. The news of this fratricidal

engagement, as it seemed to Englishmen, was received with pain and deep concern. Mr. Churchill expressed the public feeling when he paid tribute to the courage which the French seamen had shown in this "unnatural" struggle. It was the beginning of a series of painful disillusionments which were to follow at Dakar, in Syria, Somaliland, Indo-China and Madagascar. It was understandable enough that French soldiers and sailors, subjected to superior force by the Germans, should submit. But that they should fight against superior British force when that force guaranteed them immunity from enemy vengeance, this was hard for the British to endure. It was difficult for Englishmen to realize that Vichy, for all its appearances of sovereignty, was in reality a puppet régime. It is true that people in England were beginning to realize the numbing and distorting power of enemy propaganda, with its control of all information and its skill in inserting insidious ideas. It could also be speculated that there were many ways of bringing pressure on sailors or colonial officials whose families were at home under enemy control. None the less the British felt resentful, and the reproaches and insults of the Vichy radio stations reported in the press increased this resentment. It had to be accepted that there were Frenchmen, no doubt quite large numbers of Frenchmen, who chose to solace themselves for their defeat by a bitter belligerency against their allies. The harm done to Franco-British relations is and will remain difficult to overtake. But in the main the English held to the idea that, alarming and disappointing as these manifestations of hostility might be, they did not represent the real spirit of Frenchmen. It was not really France.

Meanwhile, on the same day as the battle of Mers el Kebir, all French warships in British ports were taken into control by the Admiralty. Except for a brief scuffle due to a misunderstanding on board the submarine *Surcouf*, in which two lives were lost, this order was carried out without serious trouble. Two old battleships, two heavy destroyers, several submarines and eight destroyers and a considerable number of smaller vessels were in the ports of southern England. Although only a small proportion of the French Navy, this was a most welcome reinforcement at a time when things, as we have seen, were desperate. Nearly a thousand amongst the crews declared themselves willing to continue the fight and formed the basis of the Fighting French Navy, which was commanded by Admiral Muselier and later by Admiral

Auboyneau. The remainder were repatriated. This was satisfactory, but in France itself four hundred German pilots shot down by the Royal Air Force were handed back to the Germans after the fall of the Reynaud Government. Germany's need for pilots was then very great. Soon, in the Battle of Britain, it was to become acute. Many of these pilots no doubt lived to bomb London. Here, again, was a source of bitterness and disillusion. Churchill's comment on this episode was severe.

"Such wrongful deeds I am sure will not be condoned by history, and I firmly believe that a generation of Frenchmen will arise who will clear their national honour from all countenance of them."

But while Englishmen were learning daily to distrust the hero of Verdun, another French soldier had appeared before the public mind to become a focus of admiration and gratitude. General de Gaulle had come to England to continue the fight. It became known that he had been a prescient student of tank warfare and was a skilful and able soldier. Least of all amongst the French military leaders could he be accused of errors in preparing for and meeting the German onslaught. But while it was well known that his military reputation stood high, it was his political and moral decision that made him a hero to the people of Great Britain. They were not ignorant of the prevailing opinion throughout the world as to Britain's prospects in the war. They knew that only exceptional courage and faith could move a man to sacrifice all to a cause, outwardly at least, so much on the decline. General de Gaulle and all who joined him deserve and receive that especial gratitude which is given to a friend who stays loyal in the direst extremity. Soon his imposing figure became familiar to all Englishmen through the daily press. Those who listened to the French services of the B.B.C. became familiar with his voice and his clear, soldierly rhetoric. Although the French committee in London over which he presided could not be given the full status of a national government, he ranked in people's minds with the other exiled leaders - President Beneš, General Sikorski, Queen Wilhelmina, King Haakon, M. Pierlot. The doings of his family are mentioned in the press, his son commissioned in the French Navy, his daughter a student at Oxford. About his political past little was known and little interest displayed. About his political future there was little speculation. In the summer of 1940 it was more

important that he was a good soldier, that he was straight, loyal, unyielding and firm. When on July 5th the Government of Vichy broke off diplomatic relations with London, the presence of General de Gaulle in England helped to preserve faith in France and hope for her future.

V

THE LONE STAND

WE have seen that to face the greatest military power of Europe alone with all the western coast of the Continent in hostile hands was not entirely a new experience for the people of England. But there were factors operative in 1940 which made their prospects more dismal than on any previous occasion. The most important of these was air power. This, it seemed, went far to cancel out Britain's superiority in surface ships. The Straits of Dover are only 20 miles in breadth, and the heavy ships of the Fleet could not be ventured in these waters. Only patrols of light craft could be employed. But not only did air power prise away the shield of naval protection behind which England was accustomed to shelter, it made invasion possible without the use of the sea. Here the example of Holland was the principal warning. Holland had relied on a water barrier, but parachute troops had been employed there for the first time with complete success. The technique of the preliminary bombardment to pulverize resistance, the descent of the parachute troops, the gaining of the airfield to admit transport planes with greater numbers of men to land, all these measures had been successfully demonstrated. It is to the credit of the British military authorities that they lost no time in learning the lesson and in rubbing it in to soldiers and civilians alike. Britain was forewarned in this matter, but it can hardly be said that she was forearmed. Aerodromes were unprotected from land attack. The country had no fortifications except coastal batteries. There was in England no Liège or Verdun, no nodal point of organized resistance. All had to be improvised.

The other danger which had been illustrated in the campaign in the Low Countries was that of the Fifth Column. It had been demonstrated at its worst in Holland, less, it is fair to say, from the numbers of Nazi Dutch as from the large numbers of Germans domiciled in that country. The Germans of Holland who maintained friendly social relations with their Dutch hosts until the moment when they sallied out armed at the Hague to capture the person of the Queen in her palace illustrate the infamy and the

skill which Germans have displayed in this war. Could such things happen in this country? Was there a fifth column? No one knew. There were Germans and Italians in considerable numbers, many of them refugees from their own country. But how could we be sure that they were not Nazis and fascists in disguise? It seemed reasonable to suppose that most of them were friendly, but it seemed certain that among them some spies must have been placed by the German secret service. The Government decided to take no risks, and there was an immense round up of enemy aliens at the end of May. Thousands of innocent anti-fascists were interned and at first some of the internment camps were miserably crowded, but in due course the prisoners were sorted out and sent to the Isle of Man, that convenient repository equidistant from England, Ireland and Scotland. Tribunals were set up to examine each case and month after month the reliable ones were released. The present author knows of one case in which an Italian philosopher, his son, a classical scholar of an Oxford college, and his friend, a distinguished Italian historian of antiquity, shared a bedroom in an Isle of Man hotel surrounded by barbed wire, poring over their Plato and Thucydides while the fate of the world was being decided over south-eastern England. In due course they were released, each to play his part in the war effort. About their treatment they spoke with magnanimity. Better than most Englishmen they knew the need of such counter-measures.

Another danger was the internal fifth column. How many traitors were there in England? Again no one knew. But the Government took no risks. Under a decree (the famous regulation 18B) made by the Home Secretary in pursuance of an Act of Parliament, persons suspected of being likely to hinder the work of national defence could be detained at His Majesty's pleasure. This was one of the most serious surrenders of the liberties of the subject which the war imposed on England. But it is absurd to assert, as many have done, that it was pure extra-legal tyranny, a case of *inter arma silent leges*. Each subject detained could apply for the ancient writ of *habeas corpus*, which being granted, he is brought before a judge and the authorities must show that there was reasonable cause for the detention. Many such cases were heard; in most the judges were satisfied as to the grounds of detention. It should be noticed, too, that these persons are not condemned as criminals. They are merely detained and will leave at the end without a criminal record. It would be idle, however,

to pretend that they will easily regain the good graces of their fellow-citizens. As we have seen, the numbers and influence of fascist sympathizers was not large. The British Union of Fascists, headed by Sir Oswald Mosley, and an *organ* of Anglo-German co-operation called "the Link" harboured most of the potentially dangerous men. In all only some hundreds of persons of British nationality had to be detained. Amongst them Mosley alone was of any serious account.

There was another danger to be faced, that of radio propaganda. Early in the war British listeners were interested to hear a voice on the German radio appealing to Britain to abandon the futile struggle. This was a certain Joyce, once an unsuccessful candidate for Parliament. Because of his drawling and rather affected speech a London newspaper christened him Lord Haw-Haw, and Lord Haw-Haw he still remains. No penalty was ever put on listening to enemy broadcasts. It would indeed have been impossible to enforce, for the art of delating your neighbour is not appreciated or practised in England. Nor was there ever any attempt to jam it, which might well have been done. The Government firmly took the view that if British morale could not survive the mouthings of a traitor in Berlin, then the cause was lost. It cannot be said that Haw-Haw did not have some effect, but at no time was his influence comparable to that which is said to have been exercised by the Frenchman Ferdonnet, the traitor of Stuttgart. Haw-Haw was dependent in the long run on the success of Göring's Luftwaffe. All propaganda is related in some way, however distant, to fact. It may magnify, it may multiply to the cube, but the sum is still dependent on the given number. He overcalled his hand badly, both in terrors threatened and terrors accomplished. He told the people of Aberdeen to gaze for the last time on the great granite tower of their university. It is still there. He told the people of the Thames valley that a certain important road bridge had been destroyed, but travellers on the Great Western railway could see the bridge intact and not a crater or a broken pane of glass to be seen anywhere. Englishmen have rather forgotten Haw-Haw recently, but there are those who have added sauce to the victory in Tunis by listening in to Haw-Haw's tortured apologies.

The British Government, from the moment that the campaign in France was seen to be moving towards disaster, took the wise course of preparing for the worst and of anticipating the gravest

events. On June 4th, twelve days before the surrender of France, Mr. Churchill had issued his most famous call to an unyielding and desperate resistance. It was the last day of the evacuation at Dunkirk. Speaking in the Commons he concluded with these words:

"Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. And even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the new world with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old."

These famous words, measured and inspired, sent a thrill through the whole country and set the mood of the people in a firm mould. Speculation as to the prospects of the war were ruled out. Duty excluded prophecy. We were going to resist. It was felt that the worst horrors of war, of blockade, of bombing from the air, of invasion itself, were in all circumstances a lesser evil than surrender. Germany had declared total war. Britain replied with total resistance.

The power of the British Army was terribly reduced. Most of its up-to-date equipment had been lost in France. There were scarcely two fully equipped divisions in the country. While the troops were reformed in their units, an urgent drive in arms production was called for. The entry of the Labour Party into the Government made this easier. The Socialists in September 1939 had been unwilling to join Mr. Chamberlain in office, partly no doubt because he and others of his colleagues were too much involved in the policy of Munich, partly also perhaps because of a certain shrinking from the responsibilities of office. But now they were full partners, and one of their principal leaders, Mr. Ernest Bevin, was placed at the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

This department controlled not only all civilian labour but also man-power for military purposes. It issued the summons for military service and handed the men over to the war departments. Later it was to conscript both men and women for civilian labour also. It was extremely valuable to have such an able and trusted trade unionist as Mr. Bevin at this ministry, which might have to face so many disputes in the factories. He threw himself into his work with tremendous energy. Workers were persuaded to work for longer hours under more stringent conditions. Dilution of labour by admitting unskilled men or women to jobs usually reserved for privileged trade unionists was carried out. Legislation was passed to empower the Minister to issue "essential works orders" whereby workers could be punished for absenting themselves from factories engaged on war production. Yet the greater part of the spurt in production during that hot summer was due to an immense voluntary effort by the workers, who were confident in their leaders and knew the peril in which their country stood. Travelling long distances to their factories, which were often dispersed to unsuitable areas for residence, working under the blackout, which made ventilation inadequate, learning to continue after the air-raid sirens had gone and to stay at their benches until danger was immediate, the workers exceeded all previous records. All articles were urgently needed, from familiar products like destroyers to new ones like land mines for sowing the beaches of the southern coast. Most crucial of all was the need for fighter aircraft. Lord Beaverbrook, by prodigies of improvisation, saw that Fighter Command was never left short. If the long-term programme for other machines was interfered with for this purpose, the immediate objective was gained. In due time the new four-engined bombers made their appearance, the Stirlings, the Halifaxes, the Lancasters, to be in the end the terror of German cities. At the end of June the enemy began night bombing of British towns, but not at first on a large scale. There was no sudden, paralysing blow. It was thought that German pilots, less carefully trained for night work, had to be slowly broken in. Meanwhile the Royal Air Force, prepared long before the war for night work, had begun its attacks on German industry. The scale was small (forty tons on Essen seems small enough to-day). The greater distance of the German towns from British bases reduced the load of bombs that could be carried. German industry was no more near paralysis than British. None the less the bombs, as one

commentator put it, must have done harm rather than good to the cities on which they fell, and the world, including Germany, was shown that Britain was not afraid to hit back and not without offensive spirit.

But the most striking preparation for defence in Great Britain was the Home Guard. (Its first title was Local Defence Volunteers, but this name had a flavour of bureaucratic jargon, and Mr. Churchill insisted on the simpler and more expressive title.) The formation of this force was called for on May 14th, the day of the capitulation of the Dutch armies. That evening the Minister for War, Mr. Eden, himself an officer with a distinguished record in the last war, came to the microphone and called for men from the age of seventeen to sixty-five to enroll in a force for the protection of their neighbourhood from invasion, more especially from parachute descents. Next morning throughout the country at every police station there were long queues of men and boys waiting to enroll. In a few days half a million were embodied. Soon the figure rose beyond a million. Most of those who were over forty were veterans of the last war. The younger men might have had some military training in voluntary formations before, but many had not. The work of organizing the new force into its appropriate areas and units took some time, but by the beginning of June its activities began. The basis of the force was that old English area of government, the shire or county. According to some historians many English shires owe their existing shape and form to being created as a military unit long before the Norman Conquest, to provide protection against the invasions of the Northmen. The shires are less scientifically planned than the French Departments, they are less in conformity with geographical facts and the distribution of population. But in spite of these inconveniences there were many merits in choosing them. The infantry regiments of the British Army are organized mostly on a county basis, so when the Home Guard was fully militarized its battalions were made battalions of the appropriate county – the Norfolk Regiment, the Royal Berkshire Regiment, the Somerset Light Infantry and so on. Moreover, there was in each shire a Territorial Association presided over by the Lord Lieutenant, an office dating back to the sixteenth century. These Territorial Associations had been used to regulate the voluntary territorial army which had been called up before the outbreak of war and merged in the regular forces of the Crown. There was thus avail-

able premises and a staff to conduct the complicated work of organization.

At first the Home Guard was lamentably deficient in weapons. The regular army had to be re-equipped from the arsenals. In due course a few service rifles were issued with a very small allowance of ammunition. But a collection was made of sporting rifles, and a large and various store of arms was assembled. Nothing was considered useless. A big-game rifle would be useful at a longer range, a shot-gun might stop a sentry post or a headquarters being rushed. One thing at least the Home Guard did during its first few weeks, it provided observation. From dusk to dawn during every night of the summer of 1940, in every parish in the Kingdom, small patrols of armed men were on the watch for apparitions in the Heavens. If there ever were foreign agents or fifth columnists in any number trying to signal to enemy aircraft, trying to make clandestine rendezvous for nefarious purposes, their task must have been made extremely hard. Every unexplained car, every suspicious light, the dark crannies of remote dells and copses, were examined and anything untoward reported.

In the early days when invasion was most anxiously expected the watchword of the Home Guard was static defence. The lessons of the war in the Low Countries had been learned. It was essential to deny the enemy the use of the roads. The bewildering ease with which the enemy had sped into France was not to be permitted in England. The story of how Abbeville Railway Station had been captured by a small detachment of German motor-cyclists was taken as the classic example. Road blocks were made, some clumsy, others ingenious, in every part of the country. It was not thought that until the enemy had won a base on the coast he could bring heavy tanks to bear, but it was thought that aircraft might land light tanks and certainly motor-cycles. Moreover, he could capture motor vehicles of all kinds. It was made illegal ever to leave a car unlocked, and at night they had to be immobilized by removal of some vital part. None the less the Germans were credited with the skill to make use of cars however immobilized and to bring with them distributor arms and other spare parts. To stop them on the roads was obviously one thing that the Home Guard could attempt. The signposts all over the country were removed in order that enemy cyclists might have to stop at forks and cross-roads to read their maps, while from behind a hedge a volley would ring out and decimate them. The name boards

were removed from railway stations and also from motor-vans; thus one would see on a van, "The -- Gas Co." or "Messrs. Smith, Butchers, --." ¶

The formation of the English countryside with its typical "nucleated" Saxon village was excellent for static defence. Houses huddled closely round a church at a cross-roads made an excellent "hedgehog" as we would now call it. The Home Guard Platoon would have its defences ready, its scouts posted, its men concealed. The enemy would arrive and find the road blocked, he would be ambushed. If he wanted to avoid this he would have to move more slowly over the fields, unfamiliar to him but with every twist and fold known to the defenders. It was not thought that such little knots of defence could hold for long if the enemy were in force and, as was anticipated, younger, better trained and better armed. But it would have imposed delay, and in the larger towns an advancing enemy would have been opposed by considerable numbers, and in due course regular troops were expected to arrive. To stop enemy traffic, missiles had to be improvised. Instructions were given to Home Guard units to prepare Molotov bombs, a name which had come from the Finnish war. All over the country Home Guard commanders provided themselves with petrol and tar, collected old beer bottles and filled them with a mixture of the combustible fluids. Then a fuse was attached which when the bottle burst on impact set light to the tar. To anything but a steel-plated vehicle serious damage would be caused. Even a tank might be brought to a standstill by the heavy smoke fumes. The great difficulty was the fuse. There was no regulation issue and Home Guards displayed the utmost ingenuity in experiment and eagerly canvassed the merits of different methods. Later it was made known that at Tobruk a few Axis tanks had actually been knocked out by such bombs.

In these early days static defence and denial of the roads was no doubt overdone. The Army Staff became anxious about how to keep the roads clear for their own forces, and the zeal of the Home Guards for then obstructions, their hammers for smashing petrol pumps and other scorched-earth devices had to be subdued. The present author once heard an account from a friend, a Colonel in the Gordon Highlanders, of an interesting army exercise he had watched in the English Midlands. But he considered the exercise to be unreal, for the Home Guard had not taken part. "So you think we would really have made a differ-

ence?" - "A very great difference indeed," said the colonel gloomily. "If the Home Guard had been there, neither army would have been able to move a single yard."

A great change in the condition of the Home Guard took place in August, when large consignments of American rifles arrived. These were the weapons manufactured in mass for the last war, the weapons with which Pershing would have pursued Ludendorff into Germany in 1919, if the campaign had lasted so long. In a thousand guard-rooms men worked to strip them of their twenty-year-old grime and put them into efficient use. They were excellent weapons, longer and probably more accurate than the British rifle, not quite so easy to work in arms drill and loading. From this time onwards the Home Guard was a fully armed force of riflemen. Its later development into a force armed with all the instruments of the present war, automatic rifles, new types of grenades and mortars, has transformed it into an entirely different kind of army and of course the exact nature of its armament is secret.

The staff of the regular army was fully occupied in training the men who were pouring into its depots, and very little could be done to train the Home Guard. It was left at first to train itself. Its leaders, mostly men of the last war, were well equipped to teach how to defend the approaches to Ypres or to capture a ridge on the Somme. But they were painfully conscious that for the new tactics of this war they were ill equipped. A solution was provided by private enterprise in a manner peculiarly English. Mr. Tom Wintringham, a member of a well-known Lincolnshire Liberal family, but himself a partisan of extreme socialist views, had served at Madrid with the International Brigade in the Spanish war. Gathering round him some of his comrades in that struggle, notable amongst whom was Mr. Slater, a lecturer of the most remarkable clarity and power, he decided to found a school for Home Guard training. He hoped to teach all that he and his friends had learned by experience in Spain, and all that they could glean by intelligent study of the recent campaign. They secured ground in Osterly Park, a spacious estate to the west of London, and set up their school, without buildings, without any regular equipment. The War Office approved of the venture. Home Guards seeking admission to the course, which only lasted forty-eight hours, had to pay their own fares and even subscribe to the expenses of the course. They had to find their own accommodation.

They came in thousands from all parts of the country and learned all the tricks of guerilla warfare, learned how to withstand dive-bombers, how to deal with tanks, how to throw grenades by the method of the monkey-clawl, to which often their somewhat middle-aged physique was ill adapted. The need for initiative, for preparing for the unexpected, was emphasized at every point. Several hundred men a week passed through the Osterly school and its ideas were disseminated throughout the country.

Later on the Home Guard was assimilated more closely to the regular army, but it still remained on a purely local basis. Its members are all in civil occupations and do their drills and patrols in spare time snatched from arduous war-time labours. During the autumn of 1940 commissioned rank was introduced and majors, lieutenants, sergeants, replaced the titles of company commander, platoon commander, section leader. The more formal styles and methods were not relished; they were stiffer and less friendly; the old neighbourly atmosphere of the early days was not maintained. But it was desirable to give Home Guard officers a rank which would give them standing with the regular troops with whom they would have to work in event of action. Sergeant-major instructors were appointed to formations and soon raised the standard of training considerably. In due course a Home Guard unit was accorded the great honour of mounting guard over the King's household at Buckingham Palace, a task usually performed by the Brigade of Guards.

One belief was inculcated by all engaged in the instruction of the Home Guard from the highest quarters downwards. The order of the day was not *if* there is an invasion, but *when* there is an invasion. About this we were told to have no doubt whatever. To make a more optimistic assumption was a sign of weakness. Invasion must come. Great Britain then had no allies other than the Dominions of the British Crown and the exiled Governments of the occupied countries with their sparse forces. The Italian army waited on the borders of Egypt, many times stronger than the opposing British. On the Continent of Europe there was no armed opposition to the Germans. It was inconceivable that Hitler would not attempt, and attempt soon, that final adventure which could bring him to ultimate triumph. Englishmen worked out more strictly than the Germans themselves the syllogisms of German military logic. The Prime Minister gave the most solemn warnings; he spoke of the German forces being drawn up on the

enemy coast-line and declared that the hour of fate might strike at any moment. Everything favoured the invader. The weather of that summer was perfect. After a broken period at the end of June it cleared up to calm, hot, clear weather throughout August and well into September. The Royal Air Force attacked the Channel ports, it sank barges in canals, but not for a moment was it supposed that these important harassing measures would avert the inevitable catastrophe. Tales were heard of strange doings in the Channel, of British raids, of unspecified engagements with enemy invasion barges. Nothing certain was known. Then, on the night of September 7th to 8th, something happened. That night the sun had set in a clear western sky. The Home Guard sent out its usual patrols, and about midnight the command, "*action stations*" was received throughout the length and breadth of the land. Units mobilized their full strength and stood to, on the coasts of Kent, on the cliffs of the Orkney Islands, in the apple-orchards of Devon and amongst the slag heaps of Durham. In many parts of the country the church bells were rung, the agreed signal that enemy troops had landed. From any eminence within sixty miles of London a red glow could be seen below the sparkle of bursting anti-aircraft shells. The great raids had begun, the authentic *blitz* on British cities. It must surely be that hard swift blow at the heart, which was expected to accompany the assault on the coasts. All night long the sentries peered into the moonless darkness. At last the eastern sky grew grey; the horizon lightened; the dim objects of the night, trees, posts, houses, bushes stood out clearly, familiar, harmless. The sun arose; from scores of aerodromes the morning fighter patrols took the air with their comfortable drone. The Home Guards returned to their families to Sunday rest or to their war-time shifts in factories. We have never been told what occurred or whether it was after all a false alarm. But on that night all Britain stood to arms as never before in her annals, more justly apprehensive than during any invasion alarm of the past, strained to meet a more terrible enemy and endure a more cruel fate, but with a resolution as strong as at any previous time in her serene and unbroken history.

THE SURVIVAL

THE series of engagements, principally but not exclusively aerial, which have become known to history as "The Battle of Britain" lasted during the months of August and September and October, 1940. It was punctuated by certain great days when particularly formidable efforts by the Luftwaffe were deflected with unusual slaughter of Germany's best pilots. Mr Churchill, with his usual skill, conducted the orchestra of a responsive public opinion, intervening from time to time with speeches and words now famous. On the fourth of August he warned the public against the imminent danger of invasion. On August 11th the first crisis was reached. In three days the Germans lost 217 aircraft. At Dunkirk the loss inflicted by the Royal Air Force on the enemy was three or four times as great as that suffered by the British pilots. Over Great Britain it was even larger. Moreover, in the Battle of Britain the enemy pilots brought down were all lost to him, while considerable numbers of British pilots were saved. As with the pilots so with the aircraft. By a remarkable effort in repairing facilities, many of the less damaged planes which made forced descents were made usable again. The crashed German planes made valuable salvage. But it was not only a battle of material. The quality of British pilots, fighting always against numerical odds, became from day to day more evident. Losses, and often the bombardment of their aerodromes, never seemed to discourage them. Already on August 20th Mr Churchill was able to pay his famous tribute to the pilots of Fighter Command. "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

At no time during this critical period was the offensive spirit lost. The enemy's occupied ports were attacked from the air and on several occasions shelled from the sea.

Moreover, the attacks on German industry continued, and the Prime Minister could say of them:

"I have no hesitation in saying that this process of bombing the military industries and communications of Germany and the air-

bases and storage depots from which we are attacked, which process will continue upon an ever-increasing scale until the end of the war, and may in another year attain dimensions hitherto undreamed of, affords one at least of the most certain if not the shortest of all the roads to victory."

In the event the estimate of one year was over-optimistic, but well within two years from Mr. Churchill's speech there took place the first 1,000 bomber raid on Cologne. This may or may not have surpassed the imagination of the general public, it certainly surpassed anything that Great Britain was to experience in the coming winter and anything that the Germans had imagined as likely to happen to themselves. But these confident assumptions about the future showed that the British people, while waging a war of survival in the immediate present, were also waging a war for final victory. Even at the worst time politicians and students of international affairs, when they had leisure to do so, never ceased to discuss the problems of post-war Europe after a British victory. Would the peace settlement follow the lines of Versailles? Would it be possible to impose and to maintain a satisfactory disarmament of Germany? (On this subject the people of England were being educated rapidly.) Would the old League of Nations revive, or would some form of European federation become possible? It was often said that we must this time avoid the errors of the last peace, although many people were far from clear in their minds as to what the errors of the last peace had been, too much leniency or too much severity. In enemy countries and even in friendly neutral countries these speculations and preparations, had they been known, would have seemed somewhat bizarre.

It is worth noting the nature of the war that Great Britain had now to wage. It was so different from previous struggles. For centuries past war had meant to the people of these islands battles in other lands, often in other continents. Soldiers and sailors *went away* to war, the word *away* being construed literally. War began with a sea voyage, short perhaps, like Dover to Calais, or long like Southampton to Capetown. But it was not fought on our own fields or in our own cities. The last pitched battle to be fought on English soil had been at Sedgemoor in 1685, and a very small affair at that. The last pitched battle on Scottish soil had been at Culloden in 1746. Since then the countryside of Great Britain had

lain in deep peace. Now at last it was broken. This was a war which required no voyage by sea. You could go to it by train or bus or tram. It was all around. In all parts of the country were aerodromes from which each day men set off never to return; in many parts of the country enemy aircraft fell flaming down and enemy airmen had to be rounded up by the nearest soldiers, police or enthusiastic civilians. The formation of the Home Guard, a veritable *levée en masse*, had been one step in educating Englishmen to a more perfect appreciation of war as it appeared on the Continent. The Battle of Britain was another step in this education, as was also the night bombardment that followed during the autumn and winter and is still taking place, although after May 1941 its scale was much reduced.

Marshal Goering's attempt to gain the mastery of the daylight sky over Britain was a long-drawn-out struggle whose significance was not easy to appreciate at the time. The German General Staff knew very clearly what was wanted, freedom to operate their dive-bombers against British airfields and strong points, freedom for their heavy transport and parachute planes to land troops without undue losses at precisely determined points. They had the advantage of a great semicircle of bases all round the island, but for a powerful invasion attack only the south-eastern corner was suitable for operations at short range. If the fighter aerodromes could be made untenable and vital communications blocked, then the first bases could be secured. After that they could reasonably hope that the panzer forces would complete the conquest. Such were their calculations, and certainly there was no lack of bravery or persistence. Their airman came on again and again, week after week, undeterred by shattering losses. It was thought at the time in England that the aircraft returned to different bases from those of their departure in order that the crews waiting their turn should not see the depleted ranks of their predecessors. It was said that sometimes S.S. men travelled in the bombers to make sure that there was no flinching. These were probably fables, due to the incorrigible propensity of a free people like the English to think that a state which uses terror for some purposes must use it for all purposes. It must indeed have been an extraordinary strain on the valour of the Luftwaffe. There is no sign at all that the battle was called off through any loss of morale. It was called off when the directors of the German Air Force had proved that every variation of tactics, every kind of mixture of fighters and bombers, sorties

at all times of the day and in all weathers, had failed, that they had met for the first time a superior force.

The details of the battle are most easily represented in the table on page 85. It gives the official figures supplied in the Air Force communiqués.

These figures were compiled as a result of the severe and conservative methods employed by Royal Air Force Intelligence. They show the number of enemy aircraft known to have been destroyed for certain. Beyond that there were those probably or those possibly destroyed, but of these no account is taken in the official figures. Thus, on September 15th, when the maximum figure of 185 was reached, an unofficial estimate reached the figure of 232, and it was probably not unreasonable. At first the public was a little incredulous about the good news. Early in the battle, on August 15th, when 180 German Aircraft were brought down, British losses were only 34, a ratio of well over five to one, and of the 34 as many as half the pilots made a safe descent by parachute. But the Government had acquired in the earlier months of the war a good reputation for giving reliable news and not embarking on figures unless they were accurate, and it was now rewarded for its earlier frankness. Moreover, the Battle of Britain (which might be more appropriately called the Battle of England) was waged over a relatively small part of the country, but none the less over a considerable area. It was fought over the counties of Essex, Kent, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex, which contain London, and whose population amounts to eleven millions. The inhabitants of these regions saw with their own eyes the continual crashing of enemy planes, they saw the formations come streaming in in perfect order and fluttering back to the coast ragged and reduced. They soon came to know that wrecked planes marked with the swastika were commoner sights than those marked with the circles of the Royal Air Force. Slowly it began to be realized that a great victory was in the making, a second Trafalgar, fought within our own shores. Every night the six-o'clock news bulletin gave some incomplete figures. Often the fighting was not over by that time. Later, at nine, more figures were given, nearer to a complete account. At midnight or at eight next morning the final and verified figure was known. And always there was a remarkable margin in our favour. The ratio varied. On the great September 15th it was 185 to 25, or seven to one; on September 4th it was only 25 to 15, less than double. But one fact emerged: on the days when the Luftwaffe put

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN, 1940

Air Losses				Air Losses			
Date	German Aircraft	British Aircraft	British Pilots	Date	German Aircraft	British Aircraft	British Pilots
August 11	66	26	24	Oct 6	2	.	.
12	62	13	12	7	28	16	6
13	78	13	3	8	8	2	2
14	31	7	5	9	4	1	.
15	180	34	17	10	5	5	3
16	75	22	8	11	8	9	3
17	.	.	.	12	12	10	4
18	153	22	10	13	2	2	.
19	6	3	1	14	.	.	.
20	7	2	1	15	13	15	6
21	13	1	.	16	6	.	.
22	10	4	2	17	4	3	3
23	4	.	.	18	1	1	1
24	50	19	7	19	2	.	.
25	55	13	9	20	7	3	.
26	47	15	1	21	5	.	.
27	4	.	.	22	3	6	4
28	28	14	7	23	1	.	.
29	11	9	2	24	2	.	.
30	62	25	10	25	17	10	3
31	88	37	11	26	6	2	2
Sept 1	25	15	6	27	10	8	4
2	55	20	11	28	7	.	.
3	25	15	7	29	30	7	2
4	54	17	5	30	9	5	4
5	39	20	11	31	.	.	.
6	46	19	7	Nov 1	18	7	5
7	103	22	13	2	10	.	.
8	11	3	2	3	1	1	1
9	52	13	7	4	.	.	.
10	2	.	.	5	7	5	3
11	89	24	17	6	6	4	3
12	3	.	.	7	28	5	.
13	2	.	.	8	2	6	3
14	18	9	3	9	7	.	.
15	185	25	12	10	.	.	.
16	7	.	.	11	26	2	2
17	12	3	1	12	1	.	.
18	43	12	3	13	6	.	.
19	5	.	.	14	19	2	.
20	6	7	4	15	19	1	.
21	2	.	.	16	7	2	1
22	.	.	.	17	14	5	1
23	13	4	1	18	.	.	.
24	8	4	1	19	1	.	.
25	26	4	1	20	5	.	.
26	31	8	5	21	1	1	1
27	133	34	18	22	2	.	.
28	6	7	7	23	11	.	.
29	10	4	4	24	3	.	.
30	40	22	10	25	4	.	.
Oct 1	5	3	1	26	4	.	.
2	13	1	1	27	.	.	.
3	1	.	.	28	.	.	.
4	1	1	1	29	.	.	.
5	3	9	5	30	.	.	.

forth all its power, then its losses were more than usually high. On September 7th, when in the evening a devastating attack was made on the dock area of London and was followed by the invasion alarm during the night, the enemy's loss was 103 to 22. These are only figures of aircraft losses. In men the proportion was larger, for many of the German machines were heavy bombers, while the British craft were single-seat fighters. It was officially estimated that the Germans lost on the average two and a half men to every aeroplane destroyed. When by November the attacks had declined into small sorties, and when the winter seemed to render invasion for the time being unlikely, Englishmen realized that the most dangerous crisis had been passed. Men remembered, and could now dare to repeat, the words of Pitt in his famous speech in the Guildhall of London in 1805. "England has saved herself by her exertions; she will, I trust, save Europe by her example."

How is the victory to be accounted for? To what did England owe the Valmy of her struggle? In some respects the answer is severely technological, to be explained only by skilled aeronautical strategists. (An interesting official account for general reading has been published by H.M. Stationery Office under the title of *The Battle of Britain*.) But some outlines are clear. From one point of view it was one of the last relics of the advantages won by the last war and confirmed by the Treaty of Versailles, of which Article 198 had laid down: "The armed forces of Germany must not include any military or naval air-forces." Germany had been for fifteen years without an air force. We know indeed that these disarmament clauses were often evaded. We know that German Nationalists had considered the growth of their civil aviation with a view to later militarization. We know that gliding clubs had become suspiciously popular and that training of airmen for war was a purpose behind this enthusiasm. Goering has openly boasted of the skill and zeal with which he and his friends had never abandoned their ambitions.

Yet Germany had not had the advantage of a regular, military air force, organized in its proper cadres and experimenting each year with new types and new tactics. Britain had enjoyed this advantage. Her air force had been at the end of 1918 the most powerful in the world. When it was reduced to a peace-time establishment it was fixed at a low level, and for many years the French air force was far superior. Yet it remained a highly skilled and well organized force, and its leaders compensated themselves

for the lack of numbers which a pacific public imposed upon them, by a determination to keep its technical standard high. The staff work of its leaders was efficient and far-seeing. British aeroplanes had won the Schneider trophy outright by three years of victories. Moreover, separated from both the army and the navy, the air force thought out problems in terms of air-power by itself and not as a mere ancillary arm to the other services. This has had its disadvantages in insufficient military co-operation in the early days of the war, but it has borne fruit as the war continues, and Air-Marshal Tedder, the brilliant victor of Tunisia, has permitted himself to say that the Germans do not know how to use air power.

The most careful planning and training however would not have sufficed to win the victory over Britain if the machines had not been superior to the German machines. The British aircraft industry provided by the outbreak of war the two most useful types of fighter planes. These were the Hurricane and the Spitfire, of which the former had a slightly longer range and the latter the advantage in speed and rate of climbing. Their machine-gun armament was more powerful than that of the German Messerschmitts. Thus they had just that margin in manoeuvre and fire-power which enabled them to take on superior numbers. In many ways it was a contest between machines manufactured more on mass-production lines and machines which represented the high standard of craftsmanship which has so often been the pride of British industry. The Rolls-Royce engine with which the Spitfire was fitted was the product of an engineering firm that from the early days of the internal-combustion engine had held pride of place for the perfection and durability of its workmanship. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards critics had warned British industrialists that their chief competitors, the Germans, the Americans and the Japanese, were driving them from the world markets by producing in greater volume and more cheaply. The English manufacturers replied by saying that their stuff was better. Admittedly in economic terms this was not a sufficient answer, and British industry did try to adjust itself, often with success, to new situations. But the reproach of complacency still remained. There were Scotsmen who boasted that they did not feel safe unless they were aboard a Clyde-built ship, Yorkshiremen who declared that they felt naked unless they were clothed in the textiles of Bradford, Manchester men who affected to believe that none but a Lancashire cotton garment was dyed in such a way as to stand a shower of

rain. Frenchmen, who even more perhaps than the English have tended to place standards above quantity, may sympathize with this form of pride. Yet, exaggerated and offensive as it often was, it has had some justification in the crisis of the war England was saved, apart from the skill and valour of her pilots, by a margin of technological superiority over so great an industrial nation as Germany.

But British science had another and very important contribution to make to the victory. Defence against swift-moving aircraft must be based on prompt and secure information as to the location, direction and speed of the attackers. This problem was answered by the device known as *radiolocation*. At the time it was a secret, and no public reference was permitted to it until well into the next year. Radiolocation is the detecting of objects in the air by the means of wireless rays. The principle was known to all scientists, but the elaboration of it was most successfully worked out by British scientists under the control of the Royal Air Force. Instruments were provided which could register the presence of aircraft even when they remained unseen owing to darkness and cloud or at extreme height. The observer corps, directed by professional, whole-time, technical officers, but manned in the field very largely by voluntary members, formed a network of observation posts. These reported to various district centres, and these in turn to the headquarters of Fighter Command – the nerve centre of the whole defence. There the Air-Marshal Command-in-Chief could see a picture of the movements of all aircraft, hostile or friendly, and make his dispositions to meet the attack. The balloon barrage over ports and cities could be raised and adjusted, but most important of all, the fighter squadrons could be directed to their targets. The aerial defence of a country is more difficult than its naval defence, by the fact that the defending aircraft cannot float and lie in wait like ships, and the fact that the battle is fought, not in two but in three dimensions. To keep squadrons of fighters hovering on the lookout would have exhausted the available fighter planes and pilots. It would have been ruinously expensive in petrol. But with a reliable system of intelligence the first approach of the enemy could be notified in time for the squadrons to take off, and their subsequent swift and sudden changes could be observed and mapped in a way that the pilots themselves could not have done. Thus the enemy coming in over all parts of the coast, at different heights, at all hours of the day, never failed to find that

the defenders were ready for him. How securely the public learned to rely on Fighter Command's skill in detecting the enemy's course can be shown by one occasion when it failed. A force of enemy aircraft moving in from the south coast made an unexpected change and attacked Croydon airport without the warning having sounded in Croydon. This caused much indignation, and questions were answered in Parliament. It was regarded as an unusually serious and exceptional error for an outlying part of London to be attacked without warning. The Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, could only reply that on this occasion an error of prediction had been made.

This incident illustrates an interesting political fact about this strenuous time. Parliament did not cease to sit and do its business, including even the conduct of that peculiar inquisition that British Ministers have to endure, question time. There was no breach of the tradition that any of the King's Ministers must be ready, "in his place in Parliament" to answer for the conduct or misconduct of his department. Many types of questions had to be ruled out if they were of a nature to provide information to the enemy, but public explanations of publicly known facts were never excluded. The sittings were not as regular as in normal times, and no notification was given in public beforehand as to the time of meeting. It might be thought that the burdens which fell on Ministers at such a time should have excused them from all but the briefest Parliamentary duties; the plenary powers enjoyed by the Government had provided enough executive authority. The contrary principle prevailed. Because of the urgency of the crisis the public were held to be entitled to the assurance that what could safely be discussed in public would be discussed and not evaded. The procedure of Parliament went on as usual. Punctual to the minute the Speaker in his robes, preceded by the Sergeant-at-arms with his golden mace, followed by his chaplain, swept through the corridors of the building while the attendant police gave the order "caps off, strangers!" The doors of the house were closed during the short service of intercession and then the ushers set up the accustomed cry, "Speaker in the Chair", which is echoed down the long passages. The public, admitted then to the galleries, could see at a glance most of the responsible executive leaders of the nation, seated on the Treasury Bench, each waiting to answer his daily list of questions. Sometimes, not always, the Prime Minister himself would be seated there, solid, alert and formidable. He would

have his questions to answer also, often difficult and sometimes hostile. In another hall the Lord Chancellor would take his seat on the Woolsack, that ancient symbol of England's wealth. Before him, in smaller number than the Commons, sat "their Lordships", to conduct their briefer and usually more decorous proceedings. It is a miscellaneous assembly. A certain number of Peers who are Cabinet Ministers, some hereditary peers of new or ancient lineage, peers of the first creation, statesmen, admirals, air-marshals, retired pro-consuls of the Empire, great figures of industry, representatives of science and medicine, judges of appeal, and also the Lords Spiritual, the archbishops and bishops of the Church of England. It has been more than once observed during the war that this august assembly, in spite of its reduced powers and its lack of any title to direct representation, has often attracted the favourable notice of the public by the excellence of its debates.

Thus in the most critical period of the war the forms and traditions of English political life were fully preserved. Larders were becoming emptier, clothes more shabby, life unquestionably more dangerous, but the maintenance of the customary style of government imparted a certain feeling of serenity and balance. Inferior to none of his councillors and subjects in this respect was the Sovereign himself. After the fall of France when Dr. Goebbels made his best efforts to blow away the resolution and strength of a great nation by the mere sounding of trumpets, one of his tales had been the rumour that the King and Queen had left London for a safe residence in Canada. It found little credit anywhere in England, and it was soon belied by frequent appearances in public, at military exercises, on visits to naval bases and to aerodromes, and also in due course in towns that had suffered from air-bombardment. Englishmen could reflect with pride that there was no disaster so severe that their Majesties would not visit the sufferers, while it was never claimed by Berlin that Hitler had shown himself before the homeless citizens of the Ruhr or of Bremen or Hamburg. A popular song was written with the refrain, "The King is still in London." It expressed the general confidence of the nation. When a German aviator scored a direct hit on Buckingham Palace, the King was in residence there, as indeed everyone had expected. Throughout the war King George VI has gone about his work with that unpretentious sense of duty that had made his father, the late King, so deeply respected by his people.

VII

THE FIRST VICTORIES

WHILE Britain was fighting a war of bare survival at home and enduring a more continuous air-bombardment than had yet been inflicted on any civil population, her forces were facing equal dangers against what seemed to be hopeless odds. The successes of British arms in Africa, the victories by land, air and sea, unexpected, rapid, decisive, did much to hold up the spirits of the people at home during the hard winter of 1940-1941. They also restored some strength to British prestige in south-eastern Europe at a time when it needed reinforcement. Until the spring of 1941 this was almost entirely a war between the Kingdom of Italy and the British Empire. During this period Italy could bring to bear nearly the whole of her active forces against the British possessions in the eastern Mediterranean and Africa. Britain could only reply with a fraction of her forces. Italy, especially under the fascist régime, was a highly organized military state. With a population approximately equal to that of the United Kingdom and a very fine engineering industry, Italy was a formidable power. In time of peace conscription was imposed on the people and a much larger share of the national income was devoted to armament. Even if Mussolini's figure of 8,000,000 bayonets was something of a rhetorical phrase, Italy had a large army. According to an authoritative reference book, *Whitaker's Almanack*, on September 3rd, 1939, the armies of the two countries were measured in the following figures.

Great Britain.	Active forces,	220,000	Reserves,	300,000
Italy.	" "	2,000,000	" "	5,000,000

In war numbers are not everything, but, making every allowance, there was here an overwhelming preponderance on the Italian side, especially when it is remembered that the most powerful part of the British army had already sustained a serious defeat and lost all its weapons. It was being reconstituted to face an invasion of the mother country. The Italian army was intact and had had experience of battle in the Abyssinian and Spanish wars.

In the air Great Britain was supposed to have just under 3,000

first-line aircraft and Italy about 2,000. Italy's force was intact; the British air force had had continual losses for nine months, offset indeed by valuable battle experience. At sea the British fleet available for the Mediterranean was inferior in numbers to the Italian battle fleet. Moreover, many of the Italian ships had been built for Mediterranean conditions and were extremely fast. The British ships were built on the assumption that they might have to fight on any of the seven seas; they were therefore less specialized for the local conditions. The middle of the Mediterranean was blocked, as it seemed, by the Italian air-bases in Sicily, Pantellaria and Tripoli. What could the British commanders set against this overwhelming superiority?

Here it must be remembered that all British calculations about Mediterranean defence had been based on the French Alliance. The powerful French fleet, with their numerous bases, especially Bizerta close to the Sicilian Straits, turned inferiority into superiority. The French colonial army in North Africa should have sufficed to defend Tunis and with skill and good fortune to conquer Tripoli. It was in this respect that the French armistice rankled. A Frenchman writing in *La France Libre* on November 15th, 1940, summed up the matter accurately in these words: "The rout of our divisions was an incredible and lamentable event, but in no way a transgression against honour and against friendship. The delivering up of our Colonial Empire and, above all, of our fleet appeared unpardonable."

Yet this mainstay had been lost. Egypt and the Sudan were surrounded by greatly superior Italian armies. Kenya was open to invasion from Somaliland. Malta appeared to be isolated and indefensible. The British fleet at Alexandria, thinned out perhaps by submarine and air attack, would be confronted by a more powerful Italian fleet. Where was help to come from? Fortunately a calculation of the relative strengths of the Kingdoms of Italy and of Great Britain was not the only item in the account. There were elements in the Imperial forces which could be thrown into the balance, namely armies from Australia, New Zealand and India. In numbers they were small, an Indian division and about two or three Australasian divisions were all that could be despatched at the time. The strength of the combined armies of New Zealand and Australia, including reserves at the outbreak of the war, was only 110,000 men. India, with its population of 350,000,000, was garrisoned by an army of only 400,000 men, first line and reserves

all told. But the fighting quality of the élite regiments of the Indian Army was very high and they were inured to fighting in mountains and in tropical heat. As for the Australians and the New Zealanders they had shown their mettle in the last war in Gallipoli and at Montdidier and elsewhere. Their stature and physique was superb. Nations of athletes, they represented the type of the sportsman in warfare. Farther south, on the frontiers of Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland, South African troops were assembled, a valuable contingent from a state which could mobilise only 30,000 trained men on the outbreak of war. Such were the material resources opposed to each other in the struggle for the dominion of Africa. It is worth enquiring into the spirit of the two opposing nations. Italy had the advantage, for such it was supposed to be, of self-conscious dedication to an imperial mission and to military ideals. For twenty years all that the arts of government publicity and education could do to encourage a sense of the need for fighting and conquering an empire had been carried out in Italy. No breath of opposition or criticism to these ideas had been permitted, and a great heritage had been won in the conquest of Abyssinia. Victor Emmanuel, no less than George VI, could and did proclaim himself by the proud style of *Rex et Imperator*. The New Italy had acquired that most essential component of an imperialistic psychology, success.

Britain, on the other hand, had long since passed the peak of her unimperialistic enthusiasm. There had been an age of real imperial feeling. Disraeli had been its prophet, Kipling its poet, Cecil Rhodes its greatest practitioner. This era can almost be confined within dates, 1887 to 1906, from the famous golden jubilee of Queen Victoria to the great Conservative defeat in the general election of 1906. Even at the time of its downfall it did not lack great leaders. There was Joseph Chamberlain, one of the most vigorous, energetic and combative of statesmen, a very different personality from his son the Prime Minister. There was Lord Milner, austere, intellectual and exacting. Yet the rising tide of twentieth-century democracy turned on imperialism, and in its old pride and confidence it never rose again. It might even be said that imperialism was killed stone dead in January 1906, when the nation turned out the imperialist party and accepted as its leader Campbell-Bannerman, the avowed disciple of Gladstone, the "little Englander", the enemy of all satraps and "prancing proconsuls".

Since 1906 has been the reign of Liberal-Imperialism, which properly considered is a contradiction in terms. This did not mean that there was any sudden reversal of policy in the dependent parts of the Empire, but it did mean that a slow process of emancipation and even of abdication began. How far this process has gone has been somewhat obscured by the unending clamour of the more extreme critics of imperialism at home and abroad, who see in every flutter of the British flag an arrogant assertion of might, in every colonial civil servant pensioned or every dividend paid to London a shameless exploitation. No responsible statesman, Socialist or Liberal, has ever urged the evacuation of British territories whose inhabitants would be unable to maintain internal order and justice or keep up the services of health and education. But Egypt, formally proclaimed a protected state during the crisis of Britain's war with its nominal suzerain Turkey in 1914, has been restored to independence. The British Government retained only the minimum rights of garrison and maintenance of military bases necessary for its defence, and amongst the many disadvantages under which General Wavell laboured in his defence of Egypt was the fact that he had to fight in a nominally neutral country, which had broken off relations with Germany but was not at war. In the Peace Settlement of 1919 there were no annexations of German Colonies. The Liberal or "Wilsonian" spirit prevailed, and the mandate system was introduced, to the outspoken fury of a rump of disgusted imperialists. Iraq, one of the mandated lands, was led to independence with rights of maintaining British air-bases. How slight our power there had become is shown by the narrow escape it had from being overrun by the Germans at the time of Raschid Ali's *coup d'état* hatched from Vichy-controlled Syria. Meanwhile in India, Burma, Ceylon and other countries, the process of admitting the people to representative control and executive office went on with a speed which alarmed many sagacious observers, Mr. Churchill for one. Only the necessary reserved or emergency powers were retained in order that the fabric of government could be preserved in the event of disaffection or invasion.

Now this process of unloading in greater or lesser degree the duties and rights of government on formerly subject inhabitants is not imperialism in the ordinary and common-sense meaning of the word. Englishmen were adopting the two following propositions about the Empire:

- (1) The mere fact of possession or mere military or economic

power does not in itself confer an absolute or permanent right of dominion.

(2) The British Government had a duty to educate the peoples of Imperial territory towards autonomy and possibly even independence. To this, most thoughtful men added the rider that in the world as it was in the nineteen-thirties it was not to be supposed that our imperial territories, if abandoned by us, would be left to their own destinies; there were too many unsatisfied, "have not" powers in the world. They, the Axis Powers, were animated by an imperialism that had none of these heartsearchings and ethical doubts. There was nothing Liberal about their conception of empire. The Kiplingite conception of empire, intensely odious as it was to a whole generation of English radicals, contained at least the idea of "bearing the white man's burden". This was, in its way, a noble ideal. The conception of the Nazi Herren-volk was that of entering into the white man's inheritance. There was no altruistic nonsense here. In the main the peoples subject to British authority realized this well enough.

Such were the more balanced views on Great Britain's imperial mission; they struck a mean between the older ideal of the British administrator as the philosopher king and the newer ideal of Britain casting away her possessions like St. Francis parting with all he had to the poor. Neither ideal was possible. But by no means all Englishmen held balanced views on imperialism. During the two decades between the wars a powerful cant of anti-imperialism had arisen. The English colonial administrator or army officer, rigid and unimaginative, and his cold, snobbish wife, had become a regular target for abuse and satire, in novels and even on the stage. Their beliefs and prejudices had become a standing joke even amongst many of their own class. An ignorant and uncritical contempt for things imperial had become common. This had two effects, both adverse to Britain. The Germans and Italians felt that they were dealing with a people who had lost all faith in their mission, who were in the literal sense of the word decadent, falling away from the ideals which had once made them great in the eyes of the world. On the other hand those who did not covet but merely disapproved in principle of imperialism, Americans and Russians for example, found a wealth of confirmation for their denunciations of British imperialism in the mouths of the British themselves. There was never any lack of British radicals to lecture to enthusiastic anti-British circles in the U.S.A. on the infamies of

the Empire. Of these two effects the former was the most serious, for Germany, Italy and Japan were concerned with more than disapproving of the Empire, they were resolved to destroy it. If the Axis have a legitimate grievance against England it is that Axis citizens were deceived about the vitality of their supposedly decadent enemy. To use a description once wittily applied to a British Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, the British Empire was "steel painted to look like a lath", and that is clearly a deception. It was not only the Nazi Germans who were thus deceived. Only a few days before the war a distinguished German Liberal exile declared to the author of this book that he could not believe that Britain would fight over Poland or over anything else "I have been in England for seven years," he said, "and I do not find a single breath of imperialism." What then is the explanation?

It is simply this, that Britain did not enter the war for imperialistic purposes or with any great faith in her imperial mission. Her cause was something both broader and narrower. It was a belief in freedom as a cardinal human good, a conviction that Nazi Germany, if allowed to proceed victoriously, would annihilate freedom as Englishmen knew it. It was also a sense of national danger, a threat not to the Empire as an entity but to each nation of the Empire, to England, to Scotland, to Canada, to Australia and to New Zealand. This simpler ideal, this more elementary need, inspired them. There is perhaps much of the truth in the observation of the English writer, G. K. Chesterton, when he said, "Being a nation means standing up to your equals, being an empire means simply kicking your inferiors." From nineteen-nineteen onwards the British had followed the Vergilian maxim *parcere subjectis*, to their subject peoples and to their defeated enemies. They came to realize at last that the quotation was balanced by another phrase, *et debellare superbos*.

Thus there opened this strange contest between the state which had asserted with every known device of rhetoric its manifest imperial destiny and the state whose people had become almost ashamed of their Empire. At first it was the expected which happened. The superior Italian armies pressed closely on their weaker enemy and at all points passed beyond his frontiers. In spite of some dashing raids by British patrols the enemy closed in. Kassala in the Sudan was occupied and an important railway cut. On the borders of Kenya and Abyssinia the British had to withdraw from the border post of Moyale. By August 19th, the Italians

had occupied the whole of British Somaliland, the only colony to fall into enemy hands until the Japanese war began. In September Marshal Graziani was advancing carefully into Egypt, taking Buq Buq on the 16th and Sidi Barrani on the 17th. The British forces were withdrawn to the railhead at Mersa Matruh. All this appeared inevitable; the only consolation was that Italian progress had been slow. There was no sign as yet of a *blitzkrieg*. But Graziani was building up his strength and in due course he would strike. The one good sign was a lively counter-offensive spirit by the British commanders. The enemy were harassed by active skirmishing and the British Air Force and Fleet Air Arm were active against the enemies bases, Massawa, Addis Ababa, Bardia, Tobruk. The defence was in no sense passive.

It was at this time that Mr. Churchill and the war Cabinet took one of the boldest and most brilliant decisions of military history. They judged that the only way to forestall a victorious advance by the larger Italian forces was to attack before the enemy had struck his blow. For this it was necessary to send large quantities of tanks and munitions to Egypt. These could ill be spared from the home front, where invasion was awaited and where the home garrison was poorly supplied. To the timid and the short sighted it might seem a rash and foolish decision. Yet when considered it was severely logical. To lose Egypt and the Suez canal would have been a fatal loss. A large part of our navy was shut up in the Eastern Mediterranean and once the Red Sea and the East coast of Africa down to Zanzibar were in enemy hands, the control of the Indian Ocean would be endangered. At home the Battle of Britain was going in our favour and the position was encouraging. England might still be successfully invaded and so defeated, but there was good hope of survival in that battle. There was little hope of survival if the encircling Italian armies in Africa were allowed to press their coils closer. The supplies then were allocated and placed on board ship for their long and adventurous journey. Everything depended on whether the British Fleet *could* protect their passage to Alexandria, Port Said or Suez.

Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, commander-in-chief in the Eastern Mediterranean, was almost in the position of Admiral Jellicoe in the last war, the man who could lose the war in an afternoon. If the Italian navy could destroy the British battle fleet, then it could range unopposed except by an attack. It could provide secure convoy of troops and supplies to Africa. Moving

along the coast with the Italian army and air force it could bombard the British positions as the Italian bases were later bombarded by the British at Bardia and elsewhere. From time to time British convoys were passed through the whole length of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Egypt. They suffered losses by air bombardment as they neared the Italian coasts. If they had come within range of Italian surface ships they would have been totally destroyed. From the first, however, Admiral Cunningham showed himself the master.

If Italian military movements at the beginning of the war were slow, Italian naval action was negligible. War was declared by Italy on June 10th. At dawn on the eleventh of June the British fleet put to sea. It was not a very powerful squadron. There were only two battleships, the *Warspite* and *Malaya*, built during the last war and recently reconditioned, five cruisers, some destroyers and the aircraft carrier *Eagle*. By all previous calculation Italy should have been able to set a superior force against this. But the British squadron sailed west as far as the south coast of Italy and returned to refuel without sighting an enemy vessel. Meanwhile a force of French cruisers searched the Aegean Sea and was unopposed. By June 25th, however, the French Armistice was in operation and the Italian navy was free from danger in the west. Still no disaster followed. On July 8th the British fleet was again sailing west to cover the approach of an important convoy when aircraft sighted an Italian fleet superior to the British by three battleships to two. Admiral Cunningham held to his course to bring the enemy to action. Later in the day action was joined and the British cruisers came under heavy fire but the battleships moved to their support. Then the Italian battleships, now two in number, came within range and were engaged. The *Warspite* secured a hit on the *Cesare*, after which the Italians turned away under a smoke screen. This was to be the pattern for other brushes between the two navies during the war. The smaller fleet of the power on the defensive was constantly trying to bring his superior enemy to action. But the enemy usually had greater speed, and often attack by carrier-borne aircraft was all that could be done. It was in aircraft carriers that the British possessed an element of superiority. Mussolini, confident in the value of the land bases which he possessed and those others to which he conceived himself to be the heir, had neglected this important element of a modern fleet. This may account for many of the Italian failures to

court a large-scale action. But fear of air attack did not deter Admiral Cunningham from many bold sallies. On the occasion above mentioned after contact had been lost with the surface ships the British fleet pressed on to the Italian coast and was attacked nine times by about one hundred aircraft, only one cruiser sustaining damage. When Calabria was sighted the course was altered and Malta was reached. The fleet re-fuelled there and continued its work of convoy protection. On July 18th the Australian cruiser *Sydney*, with four destroyers, sighted two Italian cruisers and engaged them. One, the *Bartolomeo Colleoni*, was sunk, the other put to flight.

In England it began to be realized that the Italian menace was less terrible than had been supposed. In Britain there was the inevitable reflection that, with the French navy and bases still fighting on the allied side, Italian power might have been reduced to a nullity. There was a moral also for those in both countries who had shown a defeatist attitude to the policy of full sanctions against Italy in 1935, the most vocal being certain politicians and writers of the extreme Right in France. Making all allowances for the under-armament of Britain at that time, the relative superiority of the two nations combined over Italy and a half-learned Germany was very different from the desperate position of 1940. These reflections are the counterpart of the moral which Englishmen were forced to meditate upon when their armies were retrieved from the beaches of Dunkirk, "If only we had been less complacent about the German occupation of the Rhineland!"

At the beginning of September reinforcements were sent to Alexandria in the form of the battleship *Valiant* and the aircraft-carrier *Illustrious*, and a large convoy was passed through the Sicilian Straits. From this time onwards the Navy was active in harrying the Italian bases on the Libyan coast, a task which they had begun from the outbreak of hostilities, at first with the help of the French. British submarines were constantly attacking Italian shipping and compelling it to proceed in convoy. When Greece was attacked new duties and opportunities came to the Navy and even the Adriatic port of Valona on December 18th was pounded by heavy 15-in shells from two British ships. But in the subsequent naval operations two great events stand out. The first was the attack by planes of the Fleet Air Arm on the Italian navy in the harbour of Taranto on November 11th, 1940. This brilliant exploit resulted in the new Italian battleship of the

Littorio class being damaged and two other battleships heavily damaged and beached. Italy had lost for some time to come that margin of superiority in capital ships which she had not dared to risk in a decisive battle.

Taranto was a carefully prepared and well-fortified naval base. It had all the advantages of defence; there was a land-locked harbour, anti-aircraft batteries, a balloon barrage, torpedo nets, protective moles. But the British airmen reached their target, and only one of the aircraft, that which contained the leader of the attack, was lost. In this battle the British Fleet Air Arm did what many thought Goering might do to the British Fleet in its home ports on the first day of the war. It did to an enemy fully warned and prepared what the Japanese did to the United States Fleet at Pearl Harbour in 1941 with all the advantages of treachery and surprise. It is not really surprising that the British Navy with its magnificent traditions, its high standards of training and service, should have achieved this first and most brilliant success with aerial torpedo and bomb. But the achievement must, once again, be set against the defeatist talk to which so many half-heated friends of Britain had turned too attentive an ear.

The other episode was the battle of Cape Matapan, one of the strangest night battles of naval history. On March 27th, 1941, Sir Andrew Cunningham sailed with his fleet from Alexandria, having had reports of Italian ships moving south-east from the Italian coast. He had three battleships and the aircraft-carrier *Formidable* which replaced the *Illustrious*, damaged earlier by German dive-bombers. On the 28th Italian ships were sighted, including the battleship *Vittorio Veneto*. Aircraft from the *Formidable* struck her with at least two torpedoes. She was not sunk, but her speed was reduced. At dusk the heavy cruiser *Pola* was also hit and slowed down. For once the Italians were not to escape so easily, although they were screened by the fall of darkness. Admiral Cunningham decided, in spite of all the risks, to force a night action if he could. By dawn he would have been within range of enemy dive-bombers. During the night a force of enemy cruisers which had turned back to assist the damaged *Pola* was encountered. They came under fire at short range from the heavy guns of the British battleships. In the course of a nightmare battle three heavy Italian cruisers, the *Pola*, the *Zara*, the *Fiume*, and also two large Italian destroyers were sunk for certain; other losses were possible. The Italian surface fleet was seriously weakened.

British naval operations could continue freely in waters which could not be reached by enemy dive-bombers. The battle for the control of the Mediterranean then passed to the land armies. It was to last for over two years.

Although the bold decision of the British Cabinet to reinforce and supply their Egyptian armies from inadequate stores was beginning to be made effective, it was the kingdom of Greece that earned the honour of inflicting the first defeat on the armies of Mussolini. On October 28th the Fascist Power struck at Greece with all the devices which Hitler, in Mr Chamberlain's words, had made "sickeningly familiar". There was the ultimatum delivered in the small hours of the morning to Ministers roused from sleep. The movements of troops over the frontier arranged beforehand. The Greek Government replied as boldly as the Governments of Norway, Holland and Belgium, but this time with success. The first Italian columns to cross the frontier were driven back with loss, and soon the war became a battle in the snows of Albanian mountains and passes. Until in the spring the German and Bulgarian armies came to the rescue, it was a complete checkmate for Italy. The British Government was able in this case to give more assistance. Aircraft were sent to Greek aerodromes. Suda Bay in Crete was occupied as a naval base. Italian strongholds on the Dodecanese Islands were bombed from the air, and also Naples, Brindisi, Bari and Valona. But more important than all this was the blow which General Wavell, the British Commander in Egypt, was preparing.

Marshal Graziani was not yet quite ready to begin his conquest of Egypt. He had penetrated to Sidi Barrani on the coast, and the British forces lay before him across a broad no-man's land. General Wavell succeeded in bringing a striking force across this broad belt unobserved, and on December 9th an outflanking attack was delivered on Sidi Barrani and the Italian force isolated. On December 11th it fell with 30,000 prisoners. Sollum and Capuzzo followed, and Bardia, a strongly defended base and harbour, was invested. On January 2nd Bardia was stormed by British tanks and Australian infantry; another 30,000 prisoners were taken. On January 21st the more important harbour of Tobruk was occupied, with 14,000 prisoners, including four generals and an admiral. While one force pushed on along the coast of Cyrenaica, another moved swiftly by the direct track across the desert and appeared to the South of Benghazi, the capital of the province. The Italian

tank force moved south and west of Benghazi but was caught and engaged in a stiff armoured battle which resulted in its complete defeat. General Bergonzoli, a general who had made his name in the Spanish war, was captured. In two months an immense province over 400 miles in length had been taken from the Italian Empire. The British had captured immense stores and 140,000 prisoners. The victorious army which achieved all this only numbered 30,000. The effect of this victory was very great. It showed the tactics of the blitzkrieg being turned against the Axis. There was the same unexpected rapidity, the same disparity in losses, the same prizes in valuable equipment and territory.

It was by no means the end of fighting in Cyrenaica. The British Government were compelled to divert aircraft, and then troops, to Greece as the German threat to the Balkans grew more obvious. The small British force which had won the victory had to rest for fresh supplies and re-equipment, while the famous Afrika Corps under General Rommel was brought over to Tripoli and took up its positions on the shores of the Gulf of Sirte. Cyrenaica was to change hands four times before its fate was decided. In April 1941 Rommel made his first conquest, without however being able to occupy the port of Tobruk, which, although isolated, endured an eight months' siege. In December 1941 General Auchinleck, replacing General Wavell, conquered the province again, occupying Benghazi and again halting on the Tripolitanian frontier. In May and June 1941 Rommel again attacked and this time won his most striking victories, cutting the British tank force to pieces, occupying Tobruk in a day and pressing right on to the edge of the Nile delta only 80 miles from Alexandria. Meanwhile in May 1941 Greece had fallen to the German attack. Even Crete was captured by the greatest parachute action that the war had seen. The naval squadron at Alexandria was confined within narrow limits of space. Malta was attacked by concentrations of aircraft which at times seemed as if they must in the end succeed. But the British Government strained every effort to avoid the catastrophe. Spitfires were flown to Malta from carriers. Convoys were pressed through, regardless of loss. The command in Egypt was changed, and Generals Alexander and Montgomery began their successful partnership. Air-Marshal Tedder developed his new technique in the use of aircraft in battle. Large supplies of new and powerfully gunned American tanks were shipped round the Cape to Suez and in the Battle of El Alamein Rommel was

decisively defeated. The British Eighth Army, to use the name by which the Egyptian force was known, won every subsequent battle in its forward course.

When one considers all the hypotheses which an intelligent and unbiased neutral observer might have entertained about the war in Africa in July 1940, and how highly he must have rated the Italian chances, it was an astonishing achievement of British arms that the German army was ever called to serve in Africa at all. Fine German units and especially air-squadrons which might have been ventured in an invasion of Britain, which might have made the last and perhaps successful assault on Stalingrad, were thrown into the African desert and decimated. Their equipment had to be poured out in double measure, for some was lost at sea, some was destroyed in African ports and dumps by British air attack and the rest expended in battle. That these crack regiments of Germany should not only have been diverted, contained and resisted, but in the end utterly destroyed, can best be described by the old phrase of the theologians, "an uncovenanted mercy"

The first victories in Cyrenaica were transient. It was very different with other achievements of the British in East Africa. We have seen that at the beginning of the Italian war the small British forces had to withdraw on all the frontiers of Abyssinia. At one time it seemed as though a defence of the region of Khartoum was all that could be done in the Sudan. But here again the bold policy of the offensive was adopted with success. It began in January 1941 with the recapture of the lost Sudanese town of Kassala on the 19th. On the 26th the invasion of the Italian Colony of Eritrea began, and at the same time a British force in Kenya, reinforced by South Africans, cleared the frontier of Kenya Colony. This was the beginning of a converging movement which was to pierce through Abyssinia. In February Italian Somaliland was conquered with surprising ease, after hard fighting at the crossings of the Juba River. In March the pace grew quicker. Forces from Aden occupied British Somaliland. On March 27th a double victory took place. The Abyssinian town of Harrai fell to the British army advancing from Mogadishu, while a harder battle was won by the storming of Keren, a mountain stronghold in Eritrea which might have seemed impregnable. On April 2nd Asmara, the Eritrean capital, was taken, and on April 6th the port and naval base of Massawa. After this the Duce's empire declined and fell with increasing momentum. Addis Ababa was occupied by South African

troops, while the British forces from Eritrea encountered the last Italian contingent at Amba Alagi, where Marshal Badoglio had won his decisive victory in 1936. The Duke of Aosta, the Italian Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, surrendered with 18,000 men and passed into captivity in Kenya, where he later died. An immense administrative problem devolved on the British, who had to assist the Emperor Haile Selassie to restore and organize his Kingdom. But of Italian authority in East Africa there remained not a trace. The Red Sea was entirely under British control and ceased to be a matter of anxiety to the Admiralty. Well-trained and seasoned army units were released for service elsewhere. In Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, the blackout restrictions were removed. It was the first town in the free world where the lights could shine again after dark. Only the heavy news from Yugoslavia and Greece distracted attention from this astonishing success for the British effort.

Politically, the victories of the British in Africa and the humiliating Italian defeat had certain consequences. The balance of the Axis shifted even more heavily in favour of Berlin. Rome's specific service to the Axis cause had been a failure. The British Empire was not only not defeated in Africa but had won new bases and sources of power. It had been able to vindicate its support of the Abyssinian Emperor. One result of this decline of Italian prestige was that Italian claims on France became less impressive. The claim to Savoy, Corsica, Nice and Tunis was not officially abandoned but less attention was paid to it. The Government of Vichy became relatively more valuable to the Germans, and Laval was able to make a bid for German approval. It was in vain that the press of Rome demanded that punishment for war-mongering must be meted out to France. Germany felt little in debt to Rome and began to think that a profitable account might be opened with Laval. Germany's necessities were by no means at an end, and she might prefer to exploit to the full her creation of a so-called "independent" French authority at Vichy. This easing of the Italian hold over France did not pass unnoticed in England and it is useless to deny that it provoked some bitter reflections. Englishmen could see how much of it was due, not to the efforts of Laval but to the successes of Admiral Cunningham and General Wavell. It was Britain that had withstood and crushed Italian power in Africa while her towns at home were being bombed and burned, while her shipping was being continually attacked and while her

airmen were striking at German industry. It was hoped that France would take note of these things. It was not doubted that many Frenchmen did take note of them. But the exasperating fact remained, that official France, the France of Vichy, the France recognized by the United States, was powerless to act. Englishmen expected, for instance, that when the Italian power in East Africa was eliminated the French Colony at Djibouti would at least recognize a new situation *de facto* as so many *de facto* situations had been recognized to the profit of the Germans.

It was difficult for Englishmen not to think that Frenchmen in the Vichy colonies, safe from direct enemy pressure, were lacking in the desire to assist the Allies and the cause of liberation. It was difficult to understand that what was lacking was rather the will and the authority to move. The officials of the highly centralized French Empire were accustomed to take their orders from the home country. The home Government at Vichy had the style and title and the aspect of an independent authority. But this was a mere semblance. It was under all forms of insidious pressure from the German Government whose authority was often all the more effective by being able to disguise itself by transmitting its orders in French and through Frenchmen. The fiat of the Fuhier could be made to appear as the command of the Marshal. In lonely outposts, Beirut, Djibouti, Martinique, Madagascar, the Marshal's writ still ran. The circumstances and the atmosphere which made this possible were not clear to people in England, preoccupied as they were by the supreme issues of the war, devoting all their mind and all their energies to the one thought, *delenda est Germania*.

VIII

THE AIR-BOMBARDMENT¹ OF ENGLAND

BECAUSE they are an insular people the inhabitants of England have not been accustomed to experiencing the effects of warfare on their own soil. This had been made a matter both of envy and reproach by their Continental neighbours. It is worth while trying to see the matter in historical perspective. In mediæval times England like other countries had her share of baronial strife and civil war, but less on the whole than most. The greater strength of her monarchy and central government brought her more internal peace and greater immunity from private wars, so that the French Chronicler Froissart could say that England was "the best kept of all countries in the world". It should be noted too that the frontiers of England in mediæval times were not always on her southern coast. Until the reign of John Lackland (1199-1216) the Duchy of Normandy was an appanage of the English Crown, or perhaps we should say the English Crown was an appanage of the Duchy of Normandy. The struggles which English Kings waged against their rivals and overlords, the Kings of France, took place in the Vexin or in Maine. Later the scene of combat was removed farther south, when the Duchy of Aquitaine, acquired by Henry II on his marriage with Eleanor, was left as the base of English activities. From the towns of Bordeaux and Bayonne, whose cathedrals are graven with the lions of England, military expeditions set out to fight the French King's armies and adherents.

But at home to the north and west England had two frontiers which were often ablaze, the Welsh and the Scots. Their importance in military history is high. In the Welsh wars Edward I developed the use of that terrible new weapon, the longbow, which was to make English armies almost continuously triumphant for a century or more. Against the Scots he developed it with great success and all but completed the conquest of that country, but his son and heir Edward II lost it once and for all at the great disaster of Bannockburn in 1314. To the north England kept a frontier with all the consequences of expensive fortifications, protracted sieges, devastating border forays, with wardens of the marches and

counties palatine. Constant military alertness was needed there, and the Scots have flattered their national vanity by telling how in the epic days of the great King Robert Bruce, and his knight Sir James Douglas, English mothers in the northern counties sang their children to sleep with the verse:

“Hush ye, hush ye, dinna fret ye,
The Black Douglas shanna get ye.”

But these are old and far-off days, tales of a grandfather. Scotland and England were united under one king in 1603 and became one state in 1707. Serious warfare between the two nations ended at the time of the Protestant Reformation after 1560. It may be said that since the effective application of gunpowder to warfare England had been free from war except for the civil war in the seventeenth century, hard fought but in comparison with the civil wars in France and Germany brief and comparatively humane. When therefore, in the summer of 1940, England began to experience direct attack and devastation, when English cities were to suffer as Arras and Ypres had suffered, the world looked on with the keenest interest, and even perhaps with some *schadenfreude*, to see how this nation so pampered by history would endure so unfamiliar an experience. It was her turn now.

The development of the air attack on Britain was a somewhat gradual process. The north of Scotland experienced the first attacks. The first bomb fell on the Orkney Islands on October 17th, 1939, and it was not until March 16th, 1940, that a civilian was killed. The first bomb on the mainland was dropped at Wick in the north of Scotland on April 10th, the first attack on an industrial town took place at Middlesbrough on May 24th. On June 18th the first bombs were dropped in the London area. From that date onwards raids became frequent by day and by night. At first the daylight raids were directed mainly against the southern ports and aerodromes, but many outlying and unexpected places were bombed, whether from accident or design. The firefighting services, the air-wardens, the ambulances, began to have practice in the duties for which they had trained so long. This gradual working up of the air-offensive was in many ways advantageous to the defenders. There was no sudden and pulverizing blow. Although the weight of the attack increased rapidly it was a relative increase, and the country had a chance of becoming inured to the attacks. By the standards which the Germans usually followed this was an

error, both tactical and psychological. It must be presumed, however, that the German High Command had considered the question carefully. The problem was by no means simple for them. By the conquest of the Low Countries and France they had acquired bases for attacking England with an ease and force which outstripped all previous calculations. The distances were short, and so the bomb load could be made heavy. Fighter protection could be given. The angle of approach could be anything from north-east to south-west. But it was not German territory, it was not from their own aerodromes that the air-armadas had to start. Therefore there was much preliminary work to be done in the equipping and enlarging of air-fields and even in building new ones. And the air-fields captured were not all captured intact. Even if they were the R.A.F. frequently made sorties against them, and this must have slowed down progress in preparing them for the great offensive. None the less it would have been possible for the German Air Force to hold its hand and make its punch sudden and severe. It is a speculative matter, but there are good grounds for the view that English morale would have suffered more if the fall of France had been followed by a lull, a period of so-called "phoney war". England was very far from being exhausted, she was indeed a fresh and untired country; action of any kind was a tonic. The most difficult thing to endure was suspense.

But there were many reasons why the Germans should press on. Their airmen needed more practice, especially in active reconnaissance. British power was mounting steadily and there was urgent need to slow down production. Most important of all was the fact that Germany herself was being attacked. From the day of the attack on Rotterdam the Royal Air Force had been taking the offensive with all the power it could put forth. At first the pilots were ordered to make sure of their objective and to bring back their bombs if it could not be found. But the indiscriminate use of the air weapon by the Germans, their wholesale attacks on French and Belgian towns and above all the machine-gunning of refugees on the roads, made such precise orders seem somewhat pedantic, and there was no sign that moderation was having any effect on the conduct of the war by the enemy. The bombing of Rotterdam was to all thinking Englishmen a crime for which there could be no defence, an infamy which would justify almost any form of retaliation. In the Polish campaign there was some reason to suppose that except at Warsaw most of the bombing genuinely

sought out military objectives, including railway stations in the towns. But Holland and Germany were at peace when the German aeroplanes set out for Rotterdam. There had been no previous campaign of threats such as served the Poles in lieu of the declaration of war of more civilized times. The Dutch were a most peaceful and friendly people with whom Germany had no ground of quarrel. And yet the centre of the second greatest city of Holland was suddenly blotted out and people killed by the thousand and remorselessly. After that it was obvious that when the Nazis felt sufficiently secure nothing would restrain them. There was one remedy only, to use the bombing weapon against them as often and as hard as possible. Only a portion of British bombing strength could be employed on raids over Germany. The enemy's barge concentrations and other invasion measures near the Channel coast had to be watched and hampered, but Germany did not go free. From June 18th to the opening of the Battle of Britain proper the following attacks on Germany and Italy were recorded:

June 18th. Raids on Bremen and Rhineland

June 20th. Raids on Turin and Genoa.

June 22nd. Krupp works at Essen

June 24th. Aerodrome in Germany attacked.

June 25th. The Ruhr district attacked.

July 1st. Raid on Kiel Canal.

July 6th. Bremen and Kiel.

July 10th. German dockyards bombed

July 14th. Emden and Kiel

July 20th. Wilhelmshaven.

July 25th. Raids on German aircraft factories

August 1st. Krupp works at Essen.

August 4th. Kiel

August 8th. Kiel.

All other considerations apart it would have been difficult for the German command to have made no reply to all this. It should be noted, too, that Britain did not seek to buy delay or immunity from raids on her cities by a passive policy. People in general approved of offensive measures. They had no illusions as to their own fate, and, being a virile and pugnacious people, as well as a peace-loving people, they wanted action.

During the month of August and early September the enemy's attack converged more and more closely on London. This is what had been expected. London was in many ways the finest target in

the world. New York alone could rival it in the density and size of its population, and as a centre of trade, manufacture and industry. It was one of the greatest ports in the world and, unlike New York, the centre of government. It was the residence of the King, the seat of Parliament and the Law Courts, it contained the principal offices of administration even after some decentralization had been effected for war purposes. The Governments of many belligerent nations were centred in London – Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium and the French National Committee. The Governments of the British Dominions had the offices of their High Commissioners there and transacted complicated business from day to day with the principal British Departments. The Prussian Marshal Blucher on visiting London had observed it with a professional eye and exclaimed, "What a city to loot". It was natural that the Prussian Marshal Goering should think, "What a city to bomb."

Except for such defences as man could make, London was not easy to protect. It was only sixty miles from Dover, from the Sussex coast at Newhaven only fifty miles, and from the coast of Essex only thirty miles. To the north and east the country is flat; to the south there are only two low ranges of chalk hills little more than 200 metres high, negligible for aerial defence when we reflect that not even the Alps could protect Turin. It was also an easily recognizable target with the River Thames winding out and in with loops that could not be concealed. It had one advantage only, its immense size. The City of London with the Bank of England and the Stock Exchange is separated from the Government Offices which are in Westminster, technically another city. (London properly speaking has never at any time been the capital of England). Eastwards from the city, mile after mile, extends the area of the docks, with great towns appurtenant to them. West, north and south extend huge residential areas, and in the last twenty years there have sprung up large factories on the perimeter of London similar to the factory belt of Paris. The urbanized area around London may be reckoned as twenty miles long and twenty miles broad. Considered merely as a problem in demolition engineering it presented no easy task. Yet this was the task which was set to the Luftwaffe, and it must be admitted that they set to it with considerable efficiency. "This is the historic hour when our air force for the first time delivered its stroke right into the enemy's heart." These were the words of Goering himself on September 7th, 1940. The deeds were well abreast of the words, for it was on

that evening that the first heavy and sustained attack was made. At five o'clock a force of 375 bombers flew up the Thames estuary and started tremendous fires in the docks. At nightfall the attack was renewed by 250 bombers, and it lasted till 4.30 next morning. The London fire-fighting services had their first lesson in large-scale fires. The official description of them was that there were nine "conflagrations", by which is meant huge areas of flame, spreading and not accurately to be measured, nineteen definable fires which called by normal standards for thirty pumps or more, forty fires graded at ten pumps, and a thousand lesser fires of varying destructiveness. There was a night of respite and on the night after, 200 bombers again visited the east end of the city. Twelve conflagrations were caused by this attack. On the two nights 842 men, women and children were killed and 2347 were injured. All the railways from London to the south were for the time being out of action. These attacks continued all through September. Every part of the area received some damage, there were 5,730 dead and 10,000 badly injured. Railway stations and telephone exchanges were hit, roads were blocked, and gas, water and electricity mains were put out of action. But the life of the city was never entirely dislocated, the damage was nowhere sufficiently complete. By October the German radio was beginning to display some sign of disappointment by referring to the bombing of London as a war of attrition. Goering's historic hour was lengthening into historic months. In October the attack was not quite so heavy, but none the less very difficult to endure. On the 15th, the full moon, a special effort was made, and 400 bombers were used and five mainline termini were put out of action, while 430 people were killed and 900 wounded.

Towards the end of November the raids began to slacken over London while the provinces suffered more heavily. By the Londoners' standards December, January, February and March were light months, but eight heavy raids by over 300 bombers were endured. On December 29th, a large area in the old City was burned out, and after that stricter regulations were made about fire-watching in business premises. The "City" normally has almost no night population. On this occasion the Guildhall, one of London's most treasured buildings, was badly damaged, but St. Paul's Cathedral which had been hit on earlier raids, escaped the fire and still dominates the skyline. In April the attacks became heavier, especially on the 16th and 19th. On May 10th the last attempt was made. Over 300 bombers raided London for five hours and

dropped a heavy weight of incendiaries and high explosives. The highest figure of casualties was reached, 1,436, on this one night.

After this all the heavy raiding ceased, and the cause is still a matter of conjecture. The defences were growing stronger, especially in night-fighting aircraft. On May 10th at least thirty-three bombers were brought down, and this was supposed to be more than 10 per cent. of the attacking force, a percentage which, if it can be maintained, is supposed to be an effective deterrent. The British defences seemed to be gaining the upper hand. We know that in May 1941 the Germans were concentrating their air force in the east for the attack on Russia. What we do not know is how far Hitler was influenced in this decision by the knowledge that his air attack on England was beginning to fail. Throughout the period of raiding, people in London and elsewhere speculated much on the methods and intentions of the German air commanders. The problem was discussed calmly and objectively in a detached and critical spirit, which in itself was evidence of the failure of the enemy to rattle and unnerve the population. What exactly, people asked, was the system behind the raids? Was it pure terrorism or was it directed mainly against communications? Why did they not concentrate more on the ports? Why was there not a more determined attempt to wipe out certain areas, the administrative centres in Whitehall for example? How far were the defences and the blackout defeating a clearly determined policy of the German Air Staff? These and other questions were quietly discussed by Londoners as they trod over the debris to their work.

It has been estimated that during the period of heavy attacks on London about 50,000 bombs were dropped, weighing 7,500 tons. The greatest weight dropped on any one night is reckoned at 450 tons, a figure which is now continually dinned into the Germans' ears by the British wireless as the offensive of R.A.F. Bomber Command grows in power, 1,500 tons on Cologne on one night in 1942, 2,000 tons on Duisburg on one night in 1943. Moreover, these British attacks are different from the German attacks on London, in that they are concentrated into an hour or so and give less time for the civil defence services to cope with the conflagrations that arise all at the same time. Heavier bombs, too, are used, two tons and even four tons, and it is considered by experts that these monster bombs do more damage relatively to their weight than smaller bombs. Yet the damage to London was terrible, and the destruction in wealth is difficult to reckon. First of all there was

the destruction of dwelling-houses, which will make it a badly overcrowded city for a long time to come. There was also destruction of capital goods, valuable instruments for the production of wealth such as the machinery of the London Docks, large factories, railway lines and railway equipment. We may include in this category the loss of office premises, where the ductive work of trade and industry and government is carried on, valuable files and records, typewriters and furniture. The medical services of the area were reduced by damage to many hospitals. On April 16th alone eighteen hospitals were hit, and each raid which brought damage to hospitals increased the number of patients requiring treatment. Fortunately the Government had at the beginning of the war arranged a considerable evacuation of hospitals and medical services to the provinces, and the absence of a large part of the child population made the strain easier to bear.

There was also the damage to things which were not replaceable, ancient and beautiful buildings. London is rich in such buildings. It is a very ancient city with an unbroken life from early mediaeval times and has been spared from sieges. The one great catastrophe was the fire of 1666, which wiped out the old wooden buildings, but spared some of the old churches. But the period after the Great Fire was a great age in English architecture, and many splendid buildings were erected after it, especially by the famous architect Sir Christopher Wren. The House of Commons' Chamber was burned out, the Guildhall and five of the old halls of the City Companies or Guilds, and many famous churches, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Law Courts, the British Museum, the War Office, the Tower of London, the Templar Church and other buildings of the Inns of Court, the Royal Mint and the Mansion House were all hit and damaged.

Yet when all was over Londoners were thankful that so much had been saved. This was not achieved without a great effort on the part of the civil defences. There was indeed a battle of London just as there had been a battle of Britain. Every night on which there was a raid brought danger of fires that might get out of control. The damage to the essential services, water, gas, electricity, telephones, roads, tramways and railways, had to be repaired in a short time, otherwise it would become cumulative and each raid would leave it worse than before. This meant defeat. It would have caused a general evacuation, with all that that meant in loss of efficiency and prestige. After the actual terror and suffering of

the raids their most important effect was the hard, endless, grinding labour imposed on workers. The first heroes of the raids were the wardens and fire-fighters, some of them women. They had to go through their duties and disregard the danger of bombs and falling debris. They had been preparing for this since before the outbreak of war. Their training stood them in good stead, but for work like this, training is less important than experience. For nine months they had been at their posts waiting for the battle, in many ways a demoralizing state of affairs. Suspense in comparative idleness is a severe test of morale. They came through it all admirably. Moreover, although there was well-organized control, the civil defence services were a civilian force. There was neither military discipline nor the fascist party discipline to weld them together. In England too much of such discipline would have defeated its own purpose. The system had to be devised for a self-governing, self-helping people, in accordance with the principle of English law which enjoins a general duty to assist in the preservation of order on "all his Majesty's subjects being of age or ability". After the wardens came the workmen on essential services on the railways, in the post office and telephone services, the gas and power plants. Light, water and gas were out of use for periods in certain districts but were restored in due time. At one period troops were brought in to clear up debris, but the work was mostly a civilian triumph. A remarkable feature of the raids was the regularity with which the daily papers appeared. Fleet Street, the journalistic centre, was often hit, but by emergency arrangements and mutual help the newspapers were always able to go to press. There were one or two mornings when in the provincial towns we found the shops without papers after breakfast, but they appeared later in the day, perhaps with an item in the stop press column stating briefly that there had been an attack on the London area that night. Other impressive facts of the raid period were the astonishing regularity of the postal services within London and between London and the provinces and the supply of food to the people of London. Milk every morning for 8,000,000 people is a big order, but in nearly all areas and on nearly all days it was delivered.

The bearing of the Londoners during this time has been justly admired. The American journalists were active in giving news and in praising the morale of the people. "London can take it" was their message to U.S.A. There had been very naturally some

speculation about the possibilities of a panic. Everyone had been inclined to wonder whether someone else would panic. The men feared for the women, the bourgeoisie of the West wondered whether the crowded and excitable proletariat of the East End would not stampede. The East Enders were not sure that the luxurious-living toffs of the West could bear such close acquaintance with the facts of life. Yet there was nothing like a panic experienced, although the authorities had prepared for a sudden and large-scale exodus. An evacuation of London did go on, as people who had kept their families there decided to move at last and others who had no essential work took the opportunity to move. Children left London at the rate of only 1,500 a day to join the others who had gone to the country early in the war. By the end of 1940 only one child in six was left in London. Mothers were assisted to go, and left at the maximum rate of 30,000 in one week. But although these figures may seem large they are small proportionately. In the twenty-eight "Boroughs" of Central London the population was 3,000,000 before heavy bombing began. In three months it fell by a quarter to 2,280,000, a rate of 8,000 per day. In a narrower area of the most heavily bombed eastern boroughs the population fell by 23 per cent. in the first four months of intense attack. These emigrations were made desirable and necessary by the mere destruction of property. Much was heard at the time about the population of London sleeping in deep public shelters. Public shelters, including the stations of the Underground Railway, were freely used, some acute problems of health arose thereby and caused much public discussion, and urgent efforts were made to improve matters. But it must not be thought that the greater part of London's war-time population slept in the public shelters. In the more densely populated inner area ¹ (the "County of London") 3,200,000 people were living. Not more than 300,000 were in public shelters, and of these only half were in the deep, mass shelters. Over a million used domestic shelters, which were of various kinds, small brick shelters, basements reinforced with concrete or steel shelters built to Government

¹ The term London is elastic. In its widest form it refers to a large urbanized area with a population of approximately eight millions. The County of London proper, established in 1888, is governed by the London County Council. Its population is about 4,250,000. This county of London is subdivided into twenty-nine areas called boroughs each with its own council and mayor. One of these is the City of Westminster, another is the City of London, the "City" *par excellence*. Its civic chief is the Lord Mayor of London.

design, named Anderson shelters after the Minister, Sir John Anderson. Later his successor at the Home Office, Mr. Morrison, gave his name to another type of shelter built to bear the weight of falling roofs and debris. The majority of Londoners slept in their own beds, often moved to ground-floor rooms. Home-made security was the most popular measure.

London had "taken it". Trials almost as severe although not so continuous were endured by nearly all the other great centres of population. The enemy had not neglected the rest of the country during the big attacks on London. Many aerodromes were attacked and some of the southern ports such as Southampton and Bristol. Further away, Liverpool as the great port of entry for the industrial north, received attention. In the middle of November 1940 a policy of really heavy blows on the London scale was adopted. It began with Coventry, a town of over 200,000 inhabitants and important as the location of much of the motor industry. On November 14th a determined attack was made on this comparatively small target. It was carried out by 400 planes, which came over the south of England with the regularity of a train service. The blow fell mostly in the centre of the city, and the cathedral was destroyed, all but the tower. Because of the concentration of bombs this raid was particularly impressive. The Germans certainly thought so, for they made it for a long time a big point of terror-propaganda and coined a verb which pleased them greatly then, *coventrieren*, to coventrate. Coventry was spared after this till April, when two raids were made in two nights. In all these three raids 1,236 civilians were killed. Throughout the winter the attacks on towns continued. The official account of the raids divides them into raids on the arms centres and raids on the ports, but they did not come in that order. The targets were switched about in order presumably to confuse the defences. Birmingham had six heavy raids, Bristol seven, Sheffield two and Manchester two. Of the ports, Southampton had three heavy raids, Portsmouth three, Cardiff one and Swansea three. Plymouth was particularly hard hit with eight heavy raids, including two periods of three consecutive nights. Liverpool and the Mersey estuary was a target of particular importance, as the course of the sea war threw the burden of shipping and docking more and more on the western side of the country. There were sixteen severe attacks, and in May 1941 seven were on consecutive nights. The main eastern port, Hull, had four bad raids. Clydeside the most remote centre of shipping and industry, was spared

until March and May, when four raids were made, and even Belfast the capital of Northern Ireland was attacked three times in April and May of 1941. The highest casualty list was at Liverpool, 4,100, Glasgow had 1,828, Birmingham 2,162, Plymouth, Hull, Belfast, Manchester, Bristol, about 1,000 each. These, however, are only the most notable attacks. There were many other minor raids on the cities mentioned and places not named in the above list had some quite severe attacks. Even after the end of mass raiding in May 1941 attacks were kept up, especially in the region of the east coast ports. In the spring and early summer of 1942 some sharp attacks were made, ostensibly as a reprisal for the heavy R.A.F. raids on Lübeck and Rostock. These were described as *Baedecker* raids, as the German wireless openly boasted that they were directed against places of historic interest and beauty, Bath, York, Canterbury and Exeter. Even in 1943 raiding has not ceased. At present, in June 1943, grievous damage is being done on small scale daylight raids by fighter bombers against watering places on the south and east coast, Hastings, Bournemouth, Torquay, Brighton. Englishmen can only draw one moral from this. The war must go on until the Luftwaffe is put out of action and its restoration made impossible.¹

After the display of courage and resolution shown by the people of London, the rest of the country had an inspiring example and a standard below which it did not mean to fall. The different parts of the British Isles have a strong provincial pride, and if in normal times they resent the complacent superiority of Londoners, typically English in being rarely expressed, they were determined to prove that they could show as much fortitude and as much capacity for skilful unprovocation in an emergency. An interesting psychological phenomenon in Great Britain is the notion, it has little basis in fact, that the farther north you live the more virile you are. The south is thought of as being the soft, the easy, the luxurious part of the country, the north as hard-bitten, realistic and tough. The pride of Birmingham, the great iron city, is formidable, but to the people of Yorkshire and Lancashire Birmingham men are practically "Southerners", the word being of course a term of abuse. Scotland is north of everything else, and the pride

¹ Mr. Churchill, speaking in London on June 30th, 1943, gave the air-raid casualties in round figures as 40,000 killed and 120,000 wounded. This figure covers the nine months of intensive bombing; the total for the whole war will be much greater.

of the Scots in their dourness and their martial qualities, has been remarked through the ages. (Sir Walter Scott makes King Louis XI jest on this subject with the archers of his Scottish guard.) In the north of Scotland lies the granite city of Aberdeen with a pride as monumental as its stone, thinking but little of snobbish Edinburgh and plutocratic Glasgow. In Belfast the hardy Ulstermen, the frontier guard of the empire against the insidious Irish, consider their province to be *facile princeps* in the qualities that make a man a man. The Southerners, vaguely conscious of these pretensions of their northern neighbours, are inclined to attribute it all to a natural and excusable compensation for crude manners and uncouth speech. The bughers of ancient seaports like Bristol and Southampton feel themselves to be citizens of no mean city, and Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham, which man the ships of the Royal Navy, have an *ex officio* claim to superior merit. Southern England, considering that it has been, is and always will be, both the flower and the centre of Western Civilization, listens with infinite tolerance to the vocal claims of all other portions of the English-speaking world; it does not care.

So city after city braced itself for the terrible ordeal, resolved not to be found wanting in the eyes of the nation. In those few towns of importance which remained unscathed relief was mingled with a feeling almost of guilt and unworthiness that they had not been called upon to play their part. As the bombing went on many improvements were made in the defence services. The fire brigades of the whole country were reorganized under one control in order that districts might more speedily help each other. One of the principal lessons of the raids was the need for water when, as so often happens, the water-pipes were broken. An enormous amount of labour and of valuable steel was spent in erecting static-water-tanks which would provide water in the worst emergency. Many thousands of small trailer-pumps were provided throughout the country and teams trained to use them. Relief for those who had lost their homes, their clothes and furniture became a more specialized form of administration, and everything possible was done to provide it from ever-straitening resources. As more practice was gained with dealing with blast effects, incendiary bombs, debris and collapsed buildings, the experience was rapidly pooled and methods adjusted. It fell to Mr. Morrison, one of the socialist leaders, as Home Secretary and Minister for Home Security, to direct this elaborate branch of administration. His under-secretary

Miss Ellen Wilkinson, socialist member for the industrial town of Jarrow, was an active and suitable representative of a service which demanded so much of women and employed so many women in its ranks. They received their share of public criticism and on the whole retained the nation's confidence.

Observers on the Continent of Europe will ask what will be the permanent effects of this widespread and prolonged baptism of fire on the English people after so many centuries of virtual immunity. Will it make them more provident and more vigilant in observing the symptoms of war in Europe, more anxious to prepare, to prevent and to forestall? Will it make them accept more rigorous service in time of peace and persuade them to meet the threat of aggression when it is still afar off and not immediately on their doorstep? The English people have always resented the idea of conscripting their men for war. Now they have had to conscript their women. Not only are there vast service organizations of women in the army, navy and air force, undertaking even combatant duties on anti-aircraft gun sites, but women have been conscripted, age-group by age-group, for every kind of agricultural and industrial service. Only the care of children will excuse women of the relative ages from "essential work". Will the moral at last be drawn? That is the question that we feel to be arising in all corners of the world.

Prediction is dangerous, and the present war has shown in many ways that in the twentieth century national characteristics are surprisingly constant. But the people of England have had a warning as never before. Often they have been on the verge of irretrievable defeat, as in the present war, but this time for once they know it. War has been with them and among them. Only invasion has been spared to them so far. Their towns will bear for many decades the marks of the war. Even the fine town-planning schemes which are being discussed with much eagerness will remind them of a demolition scheme which came upon them unwanted. Four years of constant alert, four long years in the posture of a sentinel, waiting for nightly attack, must have its effect. Defence and security will be more pregnant words in future, appealing not merely to imagination but to memory. Indeed if the people of England do not accept the lessons of this war, then it may be said, that they will not believe though one rose from the dead.

IX

THE FRENCH EMPIRE: SYRIA, MADAGASCAR

AUJOURD'HUI, centième jour de la lutte du peuple français pour sa libération." French talks and bulletins sent out by the B.B.C. every day since July 1940 had been preceded by this clarion call. It was not an English device. These talks were written and spoken by Frenchmen in London who had come over to keep up the fight. The words, however, also represented the attitude of the British Government and the British people to the French people during the long period of subjection and collaboration. It must be remembered that to Britain the armistice of June 1940 was invalid. The French Government had declared war freely in conjunction with the British. Both Governments had pledged themselves not to conclude a separate armistice or peace without the consent of the other. When the French Government, then under M. Reynaud, had asked for release from this promise, the British Government had not refused point blank. It had asked for certain conditions to be observed with regard to the French navy. These conditions had not been accepted, and therefore the request of M. Reynaud could not be granted. In view of the perilous situation of Britain both in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean they were the very minimum demands which could in the circumstances be made. The material aid which was promised by the United States and the raw materials and troops which Britain required to transport were essential for the conduct of the war and the final defeat of Germany. It was therefore impossible for the British to accept the armistice. That the Government of the United States did accept it did not affect the British Government. France had not been an ally of America, nor was she bound to America by any solemn treaty of alliance. The British therefore disregarded the armistice and felt themselves entitled to accept the help of any Frenchmen who were willing to continue the fight. Wherever, as in Equatorial Africa, Gaboon, Tahiti, New Caledonia and elsewhere, the French continued to fight, the British treated with them, gave them material aid, if necessary, military aid, and in England itself gladly received those who succeeded at risk and peril in escaping to join the standard of the fighting French. Where the French

colonies remained under the control of Vichy the fact had to be accepted. In some cases it was obvious that Axis pressure was overwhelming. In Djibouti, during the first stage of the East African war, especially when the British had been forced to evacuate Somaliland, it was well understood that the French Colonial authorities were unable to help us. But when the Abyssinian Empire of Mussolini was falling and the Red Sea wholly in British hands, then it seemed intolerable that the railway to Addis Ababa should not be opened. In Indo-China it was clear that the pressure which Japan could bring to bear was overwhelming. At the same period the British Government felt constrained to close the Burma road for a time. In this as in all other Pacific and Chinese questions, the effective word could only be spoken by America. The British did not expect the French to engage in heroic and impossible gestures which would only bring on them a complete enemy occupation. Where Vichy rule was accepted the British had to resign themselves to the absence of any help and to much malignant propaganda against Britain and against de Gaulle. But when any area remote from the immediate threat of an incursion of German troops gave positive assistance to the enemy, then the British Government felt itself entitled to resume the belligerent rights which the French alliance had conferred upon it and which had not been altered *de jure* by an armistice contrary to the terms of the alliance and never accepted by Great Britain.

Two things must be remembered. The Government of Vichy did not long remain in the position of a Government patiently accepting the defeat of its armies. Under Darlan and under Laval it accepted publicly the policy of collaboration, collaboration not merely in the day-to-day work of carrying on the life of France but in helping to defeat France's ally. The second is that the Government of Vichy had destroyed the legal constitution of France. It could make no claim to representative authority or constituent power, in spite of its boastings that it was the "legal" Government. In the occupied area was a vast population about whose sentiments much was known in London. There was constant evidence of courageous acts of resistance, passive and active, on the part of large elements of this population. If in the name of the Vichy leaders some part of the French Empire were to be made over to German agents or troops it might prove to be a fatal blow against Britain's communications.

One vital point in the sea communications of the Allies was the

west of Africa. At Dakar, the place which is nearest to the American continent, the Germans could through their agents assist the operations of the submarines which attacked the British convoys to South Africa and Egypt. This indeed was not a case in which an overt use of a French colony was made by regular German forces, but the German intelligence service was greatly aided by the fact that the armistice commission had access to the port. If, as was believed by General de Gaulle and his officers, the French of Dakar were willing to join his cause and bring their most valuable aid to the Allies, then it would be a serious error to lose this opportunity. The British Government provided the ships and the naval escort for an expedition. There followed the unhappy incident of September 23rd, 1940. The Government of Vichy, fearing some such stroke as was threatened, sent a naval force with a large contingent of Vichy sympathizers. Owing to certain mischances and to errors which were made the subject of disciplinary action by the Admiralty, the French ships were allowed to proceed through the Straits of Gibraltar and to reach Dakar. When General de Gaulle arrived before the port he found that his friends were powerless and his attempts at landing were opposed. The project was abandoned, to the extreme disappointment of the Free French and of British public opinion. Vichy, Rome and Berlin celebrated the incident as a victory, while in London there was much concern that Frenchmen should have been willing to fire on each other. The loss of life was deplored, and yet the loss in the next two years of British and allied personnel through the lack of Dakar as a base is probably many times greater.

It became more and more evident that Vichy, despairing of a real deliverance of France, was willing to accept the leadership of Hitler and to subsist on whatever crumbs might fall from the Axis table. But England did not despair of victory and with victory the deliverance of France. Nor was this only the dull, blind obstinacy of bull-headed Anglo-Saxons, unable to accept the logic of facts. Britain had other allies who had not despaired. The Norwegians and Poles had lost all their territory and still they kept on fighting. The Dutch had put all the resources of their colonial empire at the disposal of the Alliance. They were to defend it to the last against the Japanese assault. The Belgians mobilized all the wealth and manpower of the Congo as a contribution to the common cause. And these smaller states would have had, not indeed a justification but a better excuse than France, if they had submitted to

Germany and accepted the rôle of satellites. Yet they did not do so. Too often in the disputes about the rival "claims" of Vichy and London was it forgotten that the Government of Great Britain was not sole trustee and sole protagonist. It was the leading power of an alliance. This might be overlooked because the Allied Governments were perforce on English soil. They had to be armed with British or American material. Their soldiers usually wore the distinctive British uniform of this war, the famous "battle-dress". Yet they were always distinguished by a shoulder-flash denoting their nationality. Their officers, and to some extent their sailors, especially the sailors of the Fighting French Navy, wore their own uniforms, clearly recognizable. No doubt it was natural that the propaganda of the Axis and Vichy should regard the allied forces in Britain as mere mercenaries dragooned into the British army, with no will or policy of their own, assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon mould. A very different impression was made on the British people who saw and met these men daily. In any hub of the population, in the Strand in London, or in Central Station, Glasgow, the cosmopolitan appearance of the crowd was very noticeable. Polish, Norwegian, Dutch and French sailors, Belgian and Czech soldiers or airmen, are seen everywhere. Remote Scottish villages are familiar with Polish units stationed near by. In quiet English country inns any of the allied languages may be heard from the lips of aviators taking time off from their combatant duties. These men were learning to know England, perhaps to like and admire it, perhaps to become well-informed and intelligent critics. Those who meet them know that they are in no way sinking their national policies and characteristics in a general Anglo-Saxon *mélange*. They have in common with Englishmen the determination to reduce German armed power to complete helplessness, and this is a sufficient bond. Too great a tenderness to the so-called "rights" of the Vichy colonies might be fatal to the general allied cause. Britain was animated in her determination to prevent her communications in the new world from being undermined by the knowledge that her cause was that of many nations. These nations had suffered as France had suffered, their rights were in no way inferior.

In the Levant the Anglo-French position at the beginning of the war was based on the occupation not merely of Egypt and Palestine but of all Syria. Syria was garrisoned by a powerful French army and Turkish friendship had been secured by a treaty

of alliance. The French armistice, by neutralizing Syria, weakened the Allied position seriously. It withdrew the basis on which the Turkish alliance had been founded. In spite of this the Turks continued to remain stolidly neutral even under the strongest German pressure. If Turkey had given way and permitted the Germans access to Asia Minor, the British position would have been rendered impossible. Still, in spite of the loss of any positive support from Syria, the British forces were not only able to hold Cyprus, Palestine and Egypt, but to conquer the whole of Italian East Africa. These successes made it necessary for German troops to be diverted to the south-east. When Germany did strike she struck on the Continent with overwhelming force and with considerable, though limited success in Africa. The entry of German troops into Athens on April 27th was the final seal of success in this campaign. Already the attack on Cete was being prepared. A more insidious danger was threatening in Iraq, skilfully fostered by German agents.

Iraq, or to give it its ancient title Mesopotamia, is a country of the highest importance in world strategy. The valleys of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates meeting together near their mouth give access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The country is rich in oil, which is shipped from Basra on the Persian Gulf or pumped by pipe-lines to the Mediterranean coast. This oil supplied the Allied forces in Egypt and it would make easy an attack on India by any army which controlled Iraq. To lose it would have been a devastating blow. In the last war Mesopotamia, then part of the Turkish Empire, had been the scene of long and costly operations by British troops. These campaigns perhaps have never received their full share of attention in France, and scarcely even in Britain because of the hold of the major campaigns in France over the public imagination. They began with many reverses for the British and heavy losses through deaths in action and disease and by capture. But the difficulties were overcome and in the end the country was conquered even as far north as Mosul. At the same time the British General Allenby was advancing to Damascus in a brilliant campaign, perhaps the last great cavalry action in history. This battle has since been studied as an example of the use of tanks in their modern rôle as cavalry. As a result of these successes Turkish power collapsed and on October 30th, 1918, an armistice was signed. This victory was won by British troops, including Australian, New Zealand and Indian

contingents. No reproach was ever made that the French Army did not assist. It was known well enough how much it had bled at home and also in Macedonia. But the British were entitled to claim some recognition for this important success which hastened the end of the war. All serious students of strategy understood the significance of Iraq.

On April 4th, 1941, two days before the German attack on Baghdad, Raschid Ali, a former Prime Minister of Iraq, made a *coup d'état* and seized power in Baghdad. This was in itself alarming, for it was known that he was in touch with the anti-British Arab leader the ex-Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, a protégé of the Axis. To gain time Raschid Ali protested his loyalty to the Anglo-Iraqian Treaty. The British Government as a precaution sent a few Indian regiments to Iraq, and Raschid Ali went through the form of welcoming them. It is worth noting that Britain after conquering Iraq had not claimed to annex it. In accordance with the Wilsonian doctrine of no annexations it became, like Syria, a mandated area and with British protection and assistance was prepared for independence. Even this modified control was criticized strongly by the powerful anti-imperialist elements in England. In 1931 Iraq was made independent, but a treaty permitted Britain to maintain certain air-bases and bound the Iraqi Government in the event of war or threat of war to accord the British all assistance necessary for the maintenance of essential communications. On May 2nd, 1941, Raschid Ali, making a pretext of supposed violations of this treaty, opened fire on a British air-station near Basra and called the people to arms. He appealed for help to Berlin and waited for the arrival of German officers and technicians. Now with Turkey neutral these could only come by air. Coming by air they could only come through Syria. They required the use of Syrian airfields. Hitler had foreseen this and prepared to make use of Syrian ports. Vichy was to be pressed further in the way of collaboration.

Fortunately the British measures to protect Iraq, although hastily organized, were successful. To some points reinforcements were flown by air, while a column of British troops pressed across the desert from Palestine. Some of the airfields captured by the dissident Iraqis were recaptured. By May 19th, British troops were only sixty kilometres from Baghdad. It was the day before the German invasion of Crete. The British successes came just in time. The Ministers of the insurgent Government

began to desert, and on May 31st the rebels asked for an armistice. Their leader had already escaped from the country. Once again British arms had secured control of Mesopotamia. For the moment the Allied position in the Middle East was saved. But a grave situation had developed in Syria. It had become clear that Syria was no longer a no-man's-land and that German forces had been able to use it to support the campaign in Iraq.

Raschid Ali had begun his open attack on the British forces on May 2nd. Five days later Admiral Darlan, Vice-President of the Council, had an interview at Paris with the German agent Abetz. This was followed by a visit to Berchtesgaden, where he conferred with Hitler himself. On May 14th Darlan reported to the Council of Ministers at Vichy and received approval of the agreement which had been made at Berchtesgaden. The consequences of this agreement were soon felt in Syria. General Huntziger, the War Minister, sent the following telegram to General Dentz the French High Commissioner at Beylouth.

"In the course of conversations with the Fuhrer, Admiral Darlan has conceded to the Germans the use of the aerial bases of the Levant. I beg you to inform me personally by telegram if such a measure would cause a risk of bringing about discontent in the Army of the Levant. Telegraph your suggestions. No step will be taken before your reply has been communicated to the Armistice Commission."

General Dentz replied that such measures would arouse dangerous excitement. Until further orders he would carry into effect his general orders to fire on all foreign aircraft flying over the Levant. This proper display of spirit was quelled by another telegram.

"In the event of German or Italian aircraft, refrain from any retaliation. If some of these aircraft land on your aerodromes, receive them and ask for instructions. English aircraft must, on the contrary, be attacked by all possible means."

This is clear enough. The text of such telegrams was not of course known to the British at the time, but they soon had information enough to be sure that German aircraft were landing in Syria. After the occupation of Syria it was possible to check such informa-

tion with great accuracy. While preparations were made to receive the enemy aircraft, a German emissary, Herr Otto Rahn, was admitted and under the name of Renouard was given every facility for transport and all possible privileges. He was followed by Colonel von Manteuffel, an air technician. On May 9th the first enemy aircraft arrived at Nerab. Later the aerodromes of Mezze and Palmyra were also used. It is estimated that in all sixty-six military aircraft and forty transport aircraft landed. On May 15th Mr. Eden stated in the House of Commons that Syrian aerodromes were in use by the Germans, and he warned the Government of Vichy of the consequences. Next day the Royal Air Force bombarded three of the Syrian airfields.

The German planes had actually arrived before negotiations conducted by Rahn and Manteuffel had been successfully concluded. The French air chief, General Jeannequin, succeeded in reducing the airfields to be used to Aleppo alone, which in any case was the safest. Palmyra had been heavily bombed and also that part, and that part only, of Nerab which was occupied by the Germans. In order to make some show of saving face the French Administration under General Dentz declared that the only German planes which made use of the aerodromes had done so because of forced landings. But this was not convincing and suggested that the usually well-equipped and skilful Luftwaffe must have been peculiarly unfortunate. The British commander in Palestine paid no attention to such fables.

In addition to the passage of aircraft through Syria an attempt was made to send heavier material by rail to Mosul in Iraq. As the railway passed through Turkish territory this had to be disguised as purely French material and a feeble effort was made to do so. As an excuse it was said that there was danger of a Kurdish rising in the north-east. Three trains loaded with aviation petrol, arms and munitions were passed through. If the British moves in Iraq had not been swift this would have been a serious danger to them. After facilities for air and land forces came a demand for the use of ports. On May 26th General Dentz received a warning that the Germans demanded the use of the ports of Beyrouth, Tripoli and Lattaquieh. He replied stating that this would cause serious trouble and suggested the small port of Chekka. The Germans, however, insisted immediately on the use of Lattaquieh. Nothing more came of this, for before the matter was settled the British Government had decided to act. The events of the past

two weeks had shown that the armistice was a one-sided document. It did not protect unoccupied areas of the French Empire from being made the bases for further schemes of aggression by Germany. The British had no security that, if they made dispositions counting on the neutrality of Vichy, they might not be dangerously surprised. Wherever enemy influence made itself dangerously felt, there the Allied forces were entitled to go. They were also inclined to believe that in all such French territories support to the Free French would be forthcoming. The British supposition that many of the inhabitants would be on the Allied side was a compliment and a tribute to the spirit of the attitude of Frenchmen.

The campaign in Syria, when it came on June 8th, was from this point of view a bitter disappointment. For the first day or so there was some hope that the French troops would offer only a token resistance. But the battle instead of slackening began to grow fiercer. The Australians, especially, suffered heavy casualties. Machine-gun posts were strongly held, bridges were blown up and General Dentz's forces gave every indication of a skilful and resolute resistance. It could not last. The British, with command of the sea and the air and with superior equipment, were sure in the end to overcome the defence in spite of the difficulties of the terrain.

Thinking the matter over calmly, a process which is not easy in the heat of a most bitter war, an Englishman can understand that mere discipline and *esprit de corps* is responsible for much. The French troops in the Levant had been humiliated like all Frenchman by the defeat of the home country. French military valour had been decried all over the world. The supporters of Marshal Pétain had intensified this impression by their propaganda about the alleged decadence of the nation and the need for "regeneration". Here in the British invasion was an opportunity to refute the former or give proof of the latter, according to the disposition of the individual concerned. It can be admitted that in so far as Englishmen had uttered mean, false and unjust reproaches against the French army, the resistance of the French units in Syria was a punishment for this. But it should be remembered that the British Government and its leaders and the greater part of the British press had from the moment of the fall of France carefully abstained from such reproaches. Their censures were limited to protests against the collaborationists. Englishmen were

only too conscious of their inadequate land support to the French armies in 1940 and too conscious of their own defeats to feel entitled to cast many stones at the French. One element in the situation was perhaps not fully appreciated by Englishmen. They knew in a general way that severe pressure could be brought to bear on any part of the French Empire by terrible threats of what might happen to Metropolitan France if the Germans unleashed their anger against it. But a nation that has not experienced an actual German occupation cannot feel the effects of such threats so vividly as those who have thus suffered. But it was felt in England, and all that has since happened has justified this, that those who go to war with Germany are, in the homely English phrase, "in for a penny in for a pound". Whatever temporary concessions may be made, whatever shallow flatteries may be accorded for short periods, a German victory meant in the end a total annihilation of the spirit and independence of France as an active political and cultural force in Europe. It was not unreasonable for Englishmen to think that, after the Germans had tried unsuccessfully to secure Iraq and to make Syria a base for such an operation, a preventive occupation by Allied troops would be welcomed and not repelled by force.

Nor was the British conduct of the war any longer marked by unrelieved failure. In 1940 a defeatist French officer, unnerved by the sudden collapse of his armies, might say that the Germans would "wring England's neck like that of a chicken". Since then major victories had been won. The Luftwaffe had been defeated completely in the Battle of Britain in 1940. Great Britain had successfully endured a winter of heavy night bombardment. The attempt of the Germans to blockade Britain into submission had failed. The danger that the Italian navy would sweep the Mediterranean and the Italian army would conquer Egypt had been averted. England could point to many elements of strength. American co-operation was assuming more concrete and positive forms. Any part of the French Empire that rejoined the Allies would qualify not only for the good will but also for the material assistance of the United States. If in the immediate present there had been British reverses in Crete and in Cyrenaica, Syria was no longer in immediate danger of German vengeance. The island of Cyprus and Admiral Cunningham's fleet stood on guard to protect it. Hitler and Mussolini were unable to assist General Dentz either by land or in the air.

Nor was it a British occupation that was offered to the Syrian Administration. French troops entered the country with the British. General Catroux appealed to his fellow-countrymen in the name of the Free French Empire. Why should the voice of this distinguished soldier not receive more attention than those who obeyed the German-controlled puppets of Vichy? There was another element in the situation. General Catroux in his proclamation declared that as leader of the Free French Forces in the Levant he would confer independence on Syria and the Lebanon. This was no improvisation of the moment but the fulfilment of the guardianship policy which the mandate system implies. It was in accordance with treaties concluded in December 1936 between France on the one hand and Syria and Lebanon on the other, but which had not been ratified in Paris by the outbreak of the war. Berlin and Vichy might accuse the British and the French National Committee of disposing of parts of the French Empire for temporary advantages, but they were doing nothing that was not clearly envisaged in the treaty of 1936 and in the logic of the mandate system. The Germans, who had appealed to violent Pan-Arabian sentiment in their support of Raschid Ali, and whose agents in Syria had lost no opportunity in stirring up discontent with French rule, were certainly in no position to make this charge.

There was to be one more campaign in which French forces and British forces were to fire on each other. After the entry of Japan into the war by the attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7th, 1941, the whole Allied position was endangered. With French Indo-China as a base the Malayan Peninsula was quickly overrun, and the two British battleships, *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* were sunk by Japanese air attack. Singapore fell on February 15th, and Rangoon, the Capital of Burma, on March 8th. Already farther to the east the Americans had lost the Philippine Islands and the great archipelago of the western Pacific was falling into Japanese hands. Not only was India threatened, but all the Allied sea communications in the Indian Ocean up to the African coast. On April 5th the Japanese were able to push their aircraft-carriers far enough west to launch an attack on Colombo, the port of Ceylon. The defences of the port were ready and the Japanese planes suffered heavy losses. But in naval operations in this area two British cruisers and an aircraft-carrier were sunk. Japanese submarines were able to operate off the African coast even in the

Mozambique channel between Madagascar and the mainland. It was obvious that if the Japanese could send a sufficiently powerful expedition to Madagascar they could capture the island and by aircraft and surface ships cut communications between the Cape of Good Hope and India and the Red Sea, and make a junction with the European Axis. The excellent naval harbour at Diego Suarez at the northern end of the island would serve them well for this purpose. Once again the British Government decided to take preventive action in order to safeguard the vital communications of the western powers. The survival of the British army in Egypt, the maintenance of supplies to Russia through Persia and the security of India were all in the balance.

Was it too much to hope that on this occasion the French authorities would join forces with us and confront the Japanese with the united strength of both French and British garrisons? The situation had changed since the events in Syria. The United States was now an ally. That help from the new world that M. Reynaud had thought essential to the continuation of the struggle was now assured. American troops were taking up their stations in all parts of the world. They were in Iceland, in Greenland, in Northern Ireland. They had landed in Australia. They were being mobilized, trained and armed with ever growing speed. And not only was this a guarantee of military support, it was, if it were needed, a guarantee of political support. The enemy propaganda, poured into French ears, suggested that in their occupation of French territories the British had designs of permanent acquisition to their monstrous empire. How far such notions found acceptance it is difficult for us in this country to say. There is indeed something comic and almost pitiable in the inconsistency of the Axis propaganda on the subject of the British Empire. At one moment it is a decadent institution, rotting, tottering to its fall. The English people have lost faith in their empire; far from wanting to extend it they are so far sunk in lethargy as to be unwilling even to defend it. This legend will serve its purpose for a moment and then, when the jealousy of some nation has to be aroused, the British are credited with a ruthless and biological acquisitiveness, seeking unending satisfaction for their greed of territory and power. The ghosts of Raleigh and Drake, of Clive and Cecil Rhodes walk again. All Englishmen know that these ideas of British imperial expansion at the expense of the French are chimeras. Even our ever suspicious, ever critical anti-

imperialists do not trouble to make capital out of such unreal suppositions. But if, as often happens, they are taken seriously elsewhere, the appearance of America in the alliance should be a sufficient surety that French sovereignty will not suffer. There is no lack of suspicion of British imperialism amongst the American people. So keen is it, and so well concentrated, that it rarely takes any account of French imperialism. The French Empire is relegated to a generous oblivion. If any British Government should ever commit the incredible folly of aspiring to any French possessions the anger and disillusion of American opinion would be overwhelming. It would be almost as foolish as reviving the claim to Calais, Normandy or Guienne. When Mr. Churchill in one of his radio speeches went so far as to suggest that he did not propose as a result of victory to abandon the overseas possessions of the British Crown there was much murmuring from across the Atlantic, and in England itself the anti-imperial radicals confessed to some dismay at so "provocative" a statement.

However after the British experience in Syria the expedition to Madagascar was carefully prepared and built up to a formidable strength. Two large aircraft-carriers were employed, and forces well trained in combined operations were brought up. This powerful display gave the local French commanders every justification of pleading to their masters in Vichy the need of submitting to superior force; it ensured that the operation could be swiftly executed, and it provided a contingent that could offer strong resistance to the Japanese if they should appear on the scene. On May 5th, 1942, the landings began.

Before dawn on May 5th troops were landed on the western tip of the island with diversions and supporting bombardments from the sea and from the air. In some places the French troops were surprised, especially where ships penetrated waters which had been mined. Beach positions were established and the troops advanced eastwards, only to be held up before nightfall by strong positions and well-directed artillery fire. British 25-pounder guns had to be brought up next day to deal with it. The positions were carried in the end, and the British forces occupied Antsirane and Diego Suarez. At Antsirane a force of 50 marines were landed on a wharf by surprise and helped in the swift occupation of the town. On the next day, the 7th, Forts Caimans and Bellevue surrendered and also the shore defences on the Orangea Peninsula. A harbour of first-class importance in naval strategy had been secured. In

places the French soldiers fought hard, while elsewhere they showed signs that they did not feel disposed to resist troops who could claim to be allies.

It was however necessary to occupy the rest of the island, as the Vichy governor showed no disposition to accept the situation. In these operations the resistance was afterwards described by Mr. Churchill as "mainly symbolic", but it was not until November 5th that the occupation was completed. As many as fifty-eight bridges were destroyed by the defenders, and there is something more than symbolic about a broken bridge. The economy of the island was interrupted by these measures, and arduous repair work had to be done by the British troops, using valuable material. In one place, from Tanpani to Brickaville 80 kilometres of light railway were laid. The defenders at least succeeded in putting the British military engineers on their mettle.

In Madagascar, as in Syria, the impression made in England by the obstinate adherence of at any rate a sufficient number of French officers to the commands of Vichy was painful and disappointing. It is realized of course that the British action must also rankle in the minds of any Frenchmen who were doing their duty to what they conceived to be the legal Government. It is difficult and indeed impertinent for a civilian of one country to judge what the soldiers of another country conceive to be required by the canons of military honour. But the political effects can be estimated and cannot be gainsaid. Wherever French army or naval officers ordered and kept up resistance to Allied forces which thought of themselves in the utmost sincerity as liberators, an opportunity has been lost of political reconciliation. Another obstacle has been placed to the progress, so ardently desired in Britain and America, of bridging the gap between France and England. At least this question may be asked. With Beylouth and Tananarive owing allegiance to and taking their orders from General de Gaulle, is the reconstitution of France, homeland and empire, nearer or further from realization? With British and Allied forces aiding and assisting in the defence of these places, able to use them as bases for future offensives, is the defeat of Nazi Germany and of Japan further off or nearer to its final accomplishment?

X

THE RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

WHEN France and Great Britain declared war on Germany in 1939 their position was in some respects comparable to their position at the beginning of 1918, only on this occasion they lacked the advantages of the military support of the United States. When metropolitan France was overrun in 1940 there was only one great military power left in Europe as a possible enemy of Germany. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was by any standard of measurement a great world power. In population, extent of territory, industrial resources, and organized military strength it was obviously formidable, but an exact estimate of its power was not easy to make. Was it possible to hope that this power might one day be ranged at the side of Great Britain? As the war went on those who fervently hoped for this event found little reason for encouragement. The conclusion of the Moscow Pact of August 1939 at the very time when the Anglo-French military mission had arrived in the capital had left considerable resentment in Britain. Russia, it was felt, had given Hitler the green light and permitted him to proceed with his war. The official Russian propaganda described the war, when it began, as "the second war of capitalist imperialism". This somewhat abstract view of a very concrete series of facts could not fail to irritate those who did not think in the Marxian dialect. The Finnish war had widened the breach, and little had happened to make things better. In Great Britain the Communist Party and its penumbra of Socialist intellectuals adopted the same view of it, and did nothing to help and much to hinder the nation's effort to conduct the war.

The defenders of Russian policy, however, had a powerful case to state against British and also French diplomacy. Russia had been admitted to the League of Nations in 1934 with of course a permanent seat on the Council. She had been a guarantor of collective security and could complain of confusion and faint-heartedness on the part of the western Powers. Under M. Litvinoff Russian foreign policy was in many respects the model for a good League power. She maintained friendly relations with

her neighbours in spite of some obvious irredentist claims in terms of race and language. Her Government put forward a definition of aggression to the effect that the aggressor was the state whose forces were found on the territory of a neighbour. In the light of subsequent events this definition would seem to have stood the test of experience fairly well. Over Abyssinia it was natural that Great Britain and France, Mediterranean and African powers, would take the lead. How far Russia would have gone cannot be stated, for she was never asked to participate in effective sanctions. There is some reason to suppose that she would have followed a strong lead. The war in Spain made the situation worse, for in England and France there was naturally a division of opinion, and while the Nazi and Fascist forces did appear on Spanish territory it could not be said that the Russian Government was inactive. The weak and dilatory policy of the French and British Governments over Spain aroused a general feeling on the Left that their rulers did not want to stand up to Nazi Germany, although in the case of many political leaders it would be truer to say that they wanted to believe that it would not be necessary to fight Germany. Another plea to excuse the Governments was military weakness, and in this respect the conduct and attitude of Left politicians in general diminished their claims to be convincing trumpeters of battle. When the Czech crisis arose in 1938 the policy of Chamberlain and Daladier was to deal with the matter without consulting Russia and her interests. The conference at Munich in October, 1938, was a conference of only four powers. An agreement revising the balance of power in central Europe, altering the boundaries of a state whose frontiers were as near to Russia as they were to England, took place in the absence of Russian delegates, and after all Russia's offers of military assistance had been ignored. This was a snub and an insult which could not easily be passed over. There was only one justification for it. Hitler's attitude was that the only terms on which he would treat were that Russia should be excluded. These terms were tacitly accepted. In order to preserve peace in 1938 England and France thus alienated their strongest potential ally. It was well understood how serious this was. When therefore Hitler tore up the Treaty of Munich by his occupation of Prague, his conduct was all the more resented, even by those who had been ardent Munichers. He had taken all and had given nothing. In his aim to divide Russia from the West he had been brilliantly successful, but there are some triumphs which

may cost too much if they are secured by flagrant bad faith. He made it morally possible for Britain to ally herself with Russia when Russia should be willing. He could no longer count on any British anti-bolshevik feeling in the event of war with Germany.

In the opening months of 1941, however, there was no sign of any rapprochement between Moscow and London. There were some respectful references to General Wavell's African victories in the Soviet Press, but no more than that. Sir Stafford Cripps, a prominent and independent leader of Left opinion in England, had been sent as ambassador to Moscow, but there was little to suggest that he was gaining influence. In England there was speculation on whether the Russian Government would move, as the designs of Germany in the Balkans and south-eastern Europe became clearer and more menacing. On March 1st German troops entered Bulgaria, on March 5th Great Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Bulgaria; and on March 25th the Government of Prince Paul of Yugoslavia signed a pact with the Axis. It was a familiar story. On March 27th occurred an event which might have encouraged any potential enemy of Germany to act and forestall the approaching danger. This was the revolution in Yugoslavia by which Prince Paul and his ministers were overthrown, and the young King Peter assumed the position of a reigning monarch with General Simonovitch as Prime Minister. The Yugoslav army began to mobilize and the people prepared to resist the almost certainly overwhelming force of the enemy. The news was received with the greatest admiration in England as an example of calm and resolute courage. After the overrunning of Poland, Holland and Belgium the weaker military countries were in a position not merely to suspect but to know what was likely to happen to them if they defied the German army. At this point it might be thought that Russia would have intervened. But nothing happened. We now know how powerful a German force was waiting on the eastern frontier, and it would be rash to say that the comparatively weak small forces of Greece and Yugoslavia, with not more than 60,000 British troops, could divert enough German divisions from the Russian frontier to turn the scale in the Russians' favour. But this at least may be said. With Greece and Yugoslavia still fighting, with a British army still fighting on the continent of Europe, Russia must have been perceptibly better off than she was two months later when Germany could give her wholly undivided attention. The people of Great Britain were

again presented with the agonizing spectacle of loyal allies facing defeat while only small forces could be sent to help them. As a matter of pure cold-blooded military calculation it was probably a blunder for the British Command to risk any forces at all on the Continent. The men and the material sent to Greece might have sufficed to prevent the reconquest of Cyrenaica by Rommel and to have garrisoned Crete strongly enough to defend it against airborne invasion. But considerations of honour, which, as long as there are men of honour in the world are also calculations of high policy, demanded that we should do all within our power to help our allies and to show our sincerity.

At dawn on April 6th the Germans and Hungarians attacked Yugoslavia and Germans and Bulgarians attacked Greece. Belgrade was devastated by a sudden raid from the air and the Government had to escape. On the same day the British and South African forces entered Addis Ababa; it was a great victory but poor consolation. Three days later, on April 9th, Mr. Churchill addressed the House of Commons on the situation. His concluding words were noteworthy.

"It is, of course, very hazardous to try to forecast in what direction or directions Hitler will employ his military machine in the present year. He may at any time attempt the invasion of this island. That is an ordeal from which we shall not shrink. At the present time he is driving south and south-east to the Balkans, and at any moment he may turn upon Turkey. But there are many signs which point to a Nazi attempt to secure the granary of the Ukraine and the oilfields of the Caucasus, and thus to gain the resources wherewith to wear down the English-speaking world. All this is speculation. I will say only one thing more. Once we have gained the battle of the Atlantic and are certain of the constant flow of American supplies which is being prepared for us, then, however far Hitler may go, or whatever new millions and scores of millions he may lap in misery, he may be sure that, armed with the sword of retributive justice, we shall be on his track."

This reference to the Ukraine and the Caucasus, although offered purely as a speculation, was in effect a warning; the words which followed were in the context a promise that no new orientation of the German military effort would lure Britain away from her mission to defeat the Nazi power.

The months of April and May saw a series of disasters fall upon

the British and Allied arms in the south-east of Europe and North Africa. By 13th April the German and Italian armies once more stood upon the frontiers of Egypt, having captured three British generals. On the 23rd a Greek army capitulated and the King and Government fled to Crete.

On April 27th the German troops entered Athens and raised the swastika over the Acropolis, an event which induced the same sense of profanation in Englishmen as the occupation of Paris. By the end of April the British Army in Greece had made another evacuation, but relatively more costly than Dunkirk, one-fifth of the army of 60,000 being lost. Whatever courage and skill was displayed in such an operation by the Navy and the troops themselves, the world in general could not fail to be unfavourably impressed. It may have been magnificent but it was not victory. To make matters worse, on May 2nd in Iraq an Axis puppet, Raschid Ali, carried out a *coup d'état* against the legal Government which was friendly to Britain, and a small British base near Baghdad was attacked. The pretender appealed to Germany for help, which was sent by air via Syria. Two days later Hitler spoke before the Reichstag in Berlin, and promised to unload a hundred bombs on Britain for every one dropped by the R.A.F. on Germany. On May 10th this threat was followed up by the last monster raid on London. On May 7th Admiral Darlan signed an agreement with Germany. On May 20th the great parachute attack on Crete began and the news bulletins did not conceal that it was going badly for the defenders. On May 24th there came news suddenly of one of these naval disasters which are the most alarming of all to Englishmen. The new German battleship *Bismarck* had gained the open waters of the Atlantic, and a salvo of her shells had exploded the magazine of the British battle-cruiser *Hood*, which had sunk in a few minutes. The *Hood's* consort, the *Prince of Wales*, had broken off the action and the *Bismarck* was left at large.

All these disasters were depressing and alarming. Yet there was a brighter side. On May 27th the *Bismarck*, on her way to Brest, was overhauled by the British fleet after having been shadowed by destroyers and aircraft and struck with torpedoes. In the Commons that day Mr Churchill described the action to date. Later in the sitting he received a message and rose to intervene in the debate, being careful to ask respectful permission for his irrelevant interruption.

"I do not know whether I might venture, with great respect, to intervene for one moment. I have just received news that the *Bismarck* is sunk."

'There was other good news in this month' Not only was Italian resistance in Abyssinia ending, but British troops in Iraq, by a swift counter-offensive, defeated Raschid Ali, and on May 8th he fled the country. On May 31st his followers asked for an armistice. But on June 1st the War Office announced that 15,000 British soldiers had been evacuated from Crete after suffering severe losses. Another bastion had fallen, and what made it both humiliating and sinister was that it was an island. The Aegean Sea was completely closed. Amongst many sombre reflections induced in Englishmen by these events was the ascension, made it seemed with some confidence, that the *Bismarck* had been a very much larger ship than was stipulated in the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1937. This treaty, which both in its substance and in the manner of its publication, had aroused such natural suspicion and resentment in France, had apparently been worthless. In 1941 the only observation to be made on this was, "We might have known it."

It is against this general background of misfortune that the Russian situation must be considered. The power of British arms did not at the moment recommend her as an ally to a nation which lay between the Baltic and the Black Sea. On May 12th had occurred the mysterious incident of Rudolf Hess. This eminent Nazi leader, believed to be Hitler's closest associate and by the Führer's pronouncement of September 1st, 1939, the second in succession to the leadership of Germany, made a parachute descent from a fighter aircraft at a spot to the south-west of Glasgow. He was at once arrested by the Home Guard and placed in detention. No public statement was made by the Government about his motives in visiting Scotland. Berlin suggested insanity, and you could believe that or not as you liked. It was made known, however, that he had tried to land near the estate of the Duke of Hamilton, whom he claimed to have met before. The Duke of Hamilton, a young man who had recently succeeded to his title, was a wing-commander in the Royal Air Force, celebrated for a famous flight over Mount Everest, a boxer and a sportsman, and formerly a Conservative member of parliament. He and his brothers were all engaged in active service. His house and title were amongst the most ancient and honourable in the nobility of

Scotland. No one who knew him and no sober judge of public affairs could suppose him to have any complicity with the Nazi leader. Yet the witch-hunters of politics, especially some knowing radical journalists in America, suggested that he and his kind were fertile soil for the seed of anti-bolshevist propaganda. What Hess's mission was, or whether he had a mission at all, we have not been told. But this is certain, that the British Government were not influenced by anything implied or expressed in this melodramatic incident. It became a nine days' wonder; it cheered the public up at a dark time and, as Mr. Churchill said, it was not without its amusing aspect.

Time went on and the summer solstice approached. On June 11th Sir Stafford Cripps returned from Moscow to report to his Government. There were stories of greater concentrations of German troops on the Russian frontier. The British Government was reticent on what this might portend. It seemed incredible that Hitler, with so much of Europe in his power, would begin a new war in the country in which the greatest of conquerors had failed, the country about whose natural invincibility the great Clausewitz had warned future Prussian strategists. Yet the symptoms of trouble increased. On the evening of June 21st an attentive listener to the wireless news would have observed signs of the coming event. It was announced that telephone communications between Berlin and Sweden and Switzerland had been interrupted. There was a rumour that the Reichstag had been summoned to meet next day. On the top of these rumours came an official German statement that there was to be no Reichstag meeting; Berlin expected "a quiet week end". After that it was not surprising to learn from the news-bulletin at nine o'clock next morning that German troops from Finland to the Black Sea had invaded Russia on a front of 2,000 kilometres. Hitler, in an order of the day, similar to that of May 1940, declared, in words that the Germans may yet want to recall, that he had placed the fortune of Germany in the hands of her soldiers. The Moscow Pact had gone the way of the Pact of Munich. On that Sunday evening Mr. Churchill came to the microphone and made the attitude of Britain plain beyond all question.

"Any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe . . . The Russian danger is therefore our danger, and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his

hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe. Let us learn the lessons already taught by such cruel experience. Let us redouble our exertions, and strive with united strength while life and power remain."

The assent of the nation to this statement of the position was unanimous. If Hitler hoped that amongst the wealthier classes in England there were those who would be impressed by the author of the Ribbentrop pact of Moscow as a saviour of Europe against Bolshevism he must have been very badly advised. Those few eccentrics who might take that view were mostly under lock and key. Hitler had hurled too many threats and too many insults at England to have any hope left of appearing as a secondary enemy, a lesser evil. Englishmen resolved to think of the German-Russian war in national and not in ideological terms. Moreover, while the appearance of Russia as an ally aroused no misgivings whatever in the Conservative part of the nation, it inspired great enthusiasm on the Left, especially in those pockets of Communist or quasi-communist opinion which had been disaffected to the war effort. This is not to say that those who for twenty years had taught that all wars were capitalist wars, the Reds of Clydeside and the Welsh coalfields, could change their mental habits overnight, but the last shred of sense and logic in their indifference to the war had now gone. Not that they had been at any time a majority of the labouring classes anywhere. The famous ship-building town of Clydebank had been building ships since war began; it had been heavily bombed, but it had gone on building ships. After the Russian war began, it built ships more busily than ever, and no doubt to some of the workers it was a particularly inspiring thought that argosies forged on the Clyde would in due course penetrate through the enduring night or the unending daylight of the Arctic Sea to reach the delectable land, Murmansk or Archangel itself. The more strictly disciplined members of the Communist Party made their turn about with characteristic docility as their comrades in France had done more than once before. The war had now become a holy war, or whatever the Marxist substitute for the word holy may be. Meanwhile for the responsible leaders of the nation an acute problem of strategy and supply was set, how to send material help to Russia and how to distract as much as possible of the enemy's effort away from the east.

It was a baffling problem. The Black Sea and the Baltic were

shut The route by the far north was used, but it was beset by submarines, by bombers from Norwegian bases and by the threat of action by surface ships Another route was found in August 1941, when the British and Russians jointly demanded from the Government of Iran the expulsion of Axis agents. When no reply was received Soviet and British troops occupied the country and seized the principal oil stations. By September 16th the Shah, Riza, abdicated and his son succeeded as head of a constitutional Government favourable to the Allies British technicians and material were sent out to improve the poor road and railway facilities of the country. Later in the war the Americans joined in this task. Economic assistance to Russia had been studied with care by the British Government. Whether or not the invasion on June 22nd was in any sense a surprise to Moscow, it was none at all to London Within twenty-four hours a mission had left London for Moscow under Mr Laurence Cadbury. It was armed with very complete information as to the probable economic needs of Russia, with estimates of what Britain could supply and what might usefully be exported to Britain from Russia. Thus there was begun, without a moment's delay, the task of supplying Russia with commodities of which she was originally short or which she was losing by the speed of the German advance. Later, on September 29th, 1941, a more important mission was sent headed by Lord Beaverbrook for Britain and by Mr. Averill Harriman for the United States. The routes of supply to Russia, whether by the north or the south, were long and dangerous, but tremendous efforts were made to get the goods through. For military reasons there have not been published full and accurate estimates of the material sent. We know that tanks and aircraft have been sent in large numbers, machine tools and other engineering materials. But wool and leather, army great-coats and army boots were also supplied by Great Britain to a country which is usually supposed to be productive in such commodities. What is still more striking is that later on a treaty was made between the Soviet and Canada whereby wheat was to be supplied from Canada's immense granaries. This fact is a measure of the success of the first German advances and Russia's acute needs.

But military aid was the most urgent need of all. It could not be given directly in any important measure. But after the first defeats of the Italians German troops were fighting in Africa. It should be remembered that from the day on which Italy declared

war, to the day of von Arnim's surrender in Tunis, British land forces were continuously engaged in action against the land forces of the Axis. The air-hombardment of Germany was kept up and, as heavy German raids on England had now ceased, the balance slowly swung in favour of the Allies. By the middle of September 1941 some squadrons of the Royal Air Force were actually operating in the north of Russia. This was all that could be done, and it seemed all too little. For from the beginning of the war against Russia the Germans were winning great successes and making prodigious conquests of territory.

Since 1939 Russia had improved her strategic position by advancing her frontier westwards. It stretched far into Finland west of Viborg, and the naval base of Hangó was in Russian hands. The Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania had been occupied and incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics without a blow being struck by the defenders of German culture. All the eastern part of Poland had been taken, and the southern end of the German-Russian frontier rested securely on the Carpathian Mountains. South of this Bessarabia had been occupied, and the frontier of Russia and Rumania was on the River Pruth. If it was hoped that this extension of Russian territory would save Russia proper from invasion, the hope was vain. On the other hand it was a valuable outwork or glacis on which the enemy might be held and delayed. It may well be that the possession of this broad western strip did eventually save Moscow and Leningrad from capture in the autumn of 1941. Yet considering the powerful resistance which the Russians were able to offer, it was overrun with terrifying speed. By August Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, was threatened. Smolensk was evacuated on August 13th after a long and heroic defence. At the same time the port of Odessa was encircled. The Russian forces began to retreat from the line of the River Dnieper. In the north the German forces press through the Baltic States, and on August 23rd Marshal Voroshiloff declares that the decisive moment in the battle of Leningrad has arrived. On the 28th Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, falls. On the previous day the Russians evacuate Dniepropetrovsk and blow up the great Dnieper dam. On the 31st the Russians retire behind their old Finnish frontier of 1939. On September 21st the evacuation of Kiev is announced by the Russian Command. In October the disasters continue. Odessa is taken on the 16th, and on the same day the Germans reach the outer defences

of Moscow. The Soviet Government withdraws to Kuibishev on the Volga.

To many westerners it must have seemed that the German technique of the blitzkrieg was working as efficiently on the wide plains of Russia as in the Low Countries and France. The armies which could not be stopped by the Meuse and the Albert Canal were leaping over rivers many times wider. Russia's greater population, her longer period for building up her armed forces and the sacrifices made to complete Stalin's five-year plan for equipment of industry, all seemed to be of no avail. The Germans' superior power in the air went far to minimize many military advantages of the ground forces of Russia, such as excellent artillery. Above all the Germans had that great advantage of the more experienced belligerent, troops accustomed to action and trained in actual battle. The Russian armies very rapidly learned the lessons of warfare on the field, but the initial inferiority in this respect inevitably affected their first efforts. It looked as though Moscow must fall, and Leningrad, although holding out heroically was closely invested. Kharkov fell on October 29th, and the Crimea was invaded. All through November the situation remained critical. It was time, and more than time, for a "miracle of the Marne".

It took place. At the end of November with the beginning of winter the Russians took the offensive. Rostov-on-Don, lost ten days before, was recaptured by Marshal Timoshenko. On the Moscow front a counter-offensive drove the Germans back. Four hundred villages were retaken, the town of Kalinin reoccupied, six German divisions being destroyed.

This was the first major defeat inflicted on the German land forces. Meanwhile in Africa as a pendant to the larger battles of Russia, General Rommel after furious fighting was driven out of Cyrenaica as Graziani had been before him. Both of the principal belligerents were beginning to take the measure of their opponents. On December 21st Hitler publicly admitted the gravity of the situation by dismissing Field Marshal von Brauchitsch and assuming personal command of his armies. It was now for the first time that the Fuhrer's "intuition" was belauded by the German propaganda agencies. Throughout January and February the Russian armies pressed on the Germans, gaining ground, decimating formations, forcing on them unheard-of privations and sufferings in the middle of an abnormally cold winter. Ger-

many began to experience her first really crushing losses in manpower

The effect of the Russian victories in England was great, but even before the tide turned, sympathy and admiration for Russian resistance had been universal and keen. Stalin's ruthless scorched earth policy was understood in all its bitterness. It was what Englishmen had sworn to do in their own country if invasion came, and the consciousness of this made them view the Russian sacrifices with vivid appreciation. By this time the Japanese war had broken out, and depots, docks and stores at Rangoon and Singapore had to be destroyed by British demolition squads. In some minds hopes of a complete Russian victory rose too high, and by the spring it was clear that Russia would have to endure another offensive aimed from much closer to her vital centres than the first. It came in due course, on a narrower front than in 1941 but probably more concentrated. In July Sebastopol fell and the German armies moved across the steppes to the Volga and poured into the northern Caucasus. It looked as though Asiatic and Baku might fall and with them Russia's chances of waging a mobile war. But once again at the last moment the essential bastions held. At Voronezh and at Stalingrad the Germans were held up, and there began the long and terrible siege of Stalingrad. The town was obliterated by shell-fire and dive-bombers, attacked with every combination of tanks and infantry, and yet it held. The Germans claimed to have reached the Volga on a short sector, but Russian armies remained in action on the western bank. Behind them lay the broad river over which their supplies had to be ferried under fire. The bravery of the Russian soldiers and civilians equalled anything recorded in the history of warfare. British admiration was unbounded, but anxiety to help was equally acute. In the west the bomber raids on Germany were increased beyond all former records. Cologne, Bremen and Essen in turn were visited in one night by a thousand British bombers, and on other nights raids only a little less formidable were made. New four-engined aeroplanes with huge bomb loads were being employed - Halifaxes, Stirlings, Lancasters. But this was not immediate aid. It was weakening the power of Germany for the campaign of 1943. The munitions which threatened Stalingrad were all well on their way beyond the Vistula. There arose an outcry from the public for more direct assistance. Why could we not open a second front? The Russian press and leaders echoed

the demand. On August 12th Mr. Churchill, never lacking in mobility, arrived in Moscow for talks with M. Stalin. The desire, the will to help more directly, was universal. The means and the occasion were not so easy to determine.

This outcry for the "second front" roused more internal controversy in Britain than any other problem of the war. It came nearer to making a breach in national unity than other matters of dispute. Naturally it was to some extent a partisan, political question. On the Left the friends of Russia cried most loudly for some diversion in the west at whatever the cost. But it was not only from the Left that the demand came. Lord Beaverbrook, now no longer a Minister, spoke strongly in the House of Lords, to the embarrassment no doubt of his former colleagues. The dispute, although bitter, was in some respects unreal. All desired to help, but it was a military problem, very complex and depending on information that must be secret. The demands on the British forces were very great. It would not help Russia if we were to lose Egypt, and to defend Egypt arms had to be sent round to Cape of Good Hope. Although the Pacific war was primarily a burden on America, India and Ceylon had to be defended and Madagascar had to be made secure by British arms. Large supplies, British, Canadian, American, were sent to the Russian Arctic ports at considerable loss. Cruisers and even battleships had to be endangered in this necessary task, and losses of warships and merchant ships were sustained. Reluctantly the Government decided that a second front could not be opened in 1942.

The alarm and dismay, the anger, bitterness and indignation of the extreme sympathizers with Russia became violent. Meetings were held "demanding" a second front. The words "second front now" were chalked up on the walls. In Parliament two Socialist M.P.'s who acted as independent critics, the Scotsman Shinwell, and the Welshman Aneurin Bevan, both members for mining constituencies, became almost frenetic in their denunciations of the Churchill Government. Their anxiety was understandable and their passion sincere. They had many sympathizers, and the defeats in Africa had aroused very natural doubts about our military leadership. But as so often happens in a country at war the critics were civilians. Moreover, in this particular case the civilians in question, socialists and men of the Left, were civilians who had in the past done very little to commend themselves to their fellow-countrymen as military experts. The British workers,

in factories, docks, railways and shipyards had a splendid record in the war. They had worked hard and endured dangers. Many of them had heavy additional duties as members of the Home Guard and civil defence organizations. But the organized socialist movement had been for so long indifferent to military and strategic questions. They had been inclined to rely on the solidarity of Europe's workers as a security against war, even when it became clear that the workers of Germany had lost the will and the power to avert war so far as their own country was concerned. There had been a certain time-lag between the Socialists' demand for a firm stand against fascism and their willingness to support really effective measures to provide the means of making such a stand. A young "reserved" factory worker might say with perfect sincerity that if he were in the army he would gladly make a parachute descent on the outskirts of Calais or climb Cap Gris Nez with a load of hand-grenades. The fact remained that not he but someone else would have to perform these feats. Even if he were allowed to enlist he could not be trained in time for a second front in 1942.

The second front talk, by its exaggerations and its lack of responsibility, very soon aroused a contrary opinion. Since the Government alone could judge as to the means and the opportunity there was something impertinent about these violent demands. It would be untrue to say that there arose a mood of irritation with the Russians, but the self-appointed saviours of Russia became extremely unpopular with a large section of the more conservative press. The real question at issue was this: Was the Government neglecting opportunities of assisting Russia by action in the west through lack of zeal or through timidity? But Mr. Churchill was of all men the last to be accused of any lack of these qualities. Throughout the greater part of his political life he had been suspected and accused of being adventurous in an excessive degree. He had, less than any other living British statesman, the reputation of waiting cautiously on events. Moreover, Mr. Churchill was not a one-man dictator. He had his colleagues in the Cabinet. If the leaders of the official Labour Party, Attlee, Morrison, Bevin, Alexander, were satisfied that the Government was judging wisely, then their followers should be satisfied also. On August 19th a preliminary experiment was made by the nine hours' raid on Dieppe. This proved costly, and a large number of Canadian soldiers lost their lives in fierce

fighting and more were taken prisoner. On the whole the public was satisfied to be told that it was a valuable experiment in amphibious warfare.

Through September and October the fighting at Stalingrad continued. In Egypt after the successful repulse of an Axis attack there was a lull. Then in late October the offensive began on both fronts. It is of some psychological importance that the first blow was struck by the British Army. It began on the 23rd and was accompanied by the first really formidable bombing raids on northern Italy. After many days of hard fighting the British Eighth Army broke through the enemy defences, split his army, taking large numbers of prisoners, and sent Rommel on the road of his retreat, through Mersa Matruh, Bardia, Tobruk, Benghazi, El Agheila to his main base at Tripoli. On November 8th the British and American army under General Eisenhower landed in North Africa. On November 19th the great Russian offensive at Stalingrad began. With these great events the public mind in England grew calmer. The first real complete and well-planned victories were being won against the German armies. For comparison military historians found themselves going back to the battle of Jena. It was the Russian offensive that yielded its first substantial fruits. Not only was Rostov recovered and the greater part of the north Caucasus, but the German Sixth Army, ordered to hold its positions west of Stalingrad, was surrounded and gradually worn down and starved out. When at last General Paulus surrendered with 90,000 men he had lost more than twice that number in killed. The admiration and gratitude felt in England for this victory were unbounded. It was the culmination of eighteen months of terrible sacrifice. Every Englishman knew that about half the German Air Force had been employed in Russia, and what was left in the west kept on the defensive. To this fact he owed his calmer and safer nights and the greater security of all war production. And he could the better enjoy his enthusiasm for Russia's victories, because his own armies were proving equally successful although on a smaller scale. With the opening of the North African campaign he could hope that more and more enemy troops would be withdrawn from the east with the aircraft and supplies necessary to support them. In due course he could hope for a real second front in Europe anywhere in the Mediterranean. And as Russia survived and moved on towards victory, new hope came from Africa. With Algiers as the centre

of a French Empire at war with Germany, and France reunited by the German occupation of the unoccupied zone, a great step forward was taken. The long period of waiting had not been in vain. Europe was coming alive again.

XI

THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE

ON June 4th, 1940, when Mr. Churchill, already preparing his countrymen for the danger of invasion, made his famous "we shall fight" speech, he concluded with bold and prophetic words:

"And even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the new world with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old "

There is here no specific mention of the United States. The passage could be interpreted as referring only to the help of Canada and Australia. Yet the use of the phrase, "the New World in all its strength and power ", conveyed the impression, if not the explicit statement, that the orator had in mind the power of the United States. Ten weeks later, speaking to the Commons, he permitted himself a clearer allusion. He ended his speech with these words. "Undoubtedly this process means that these two great organizations of the English-speaking democracies, the British Empire and the United States, will have to be somewhat mixed up together in some of their affairs for mutual and general advantage. For my own part, looking out upon the future, I do not view the process with any misgivings. I could not stop it if I wished; no one can stop it. Like the Mississippi, it just keeps rolling along. Let it roll. Let it roll on, full flood, inexorable, irresistible, benignant, to broader lands and better days."

It will be noticed that in this speech Mr. Churchill makes no appeal for American aid. It would have been bad policy to do so, for it would allow the American isolationists to complain that once again the United States were being lured and tricked into war. Instead Mr. Churchill makes an affirmation which is also a prophecy. He states as a fact that the two nations are being impelled by the facts of world history to unite their efforts to secure those conditions of peace and freedom which they desire. From this

fact he deduces as a consequence a process of steadily increasing co-operation. By his imposing simile of the advancing waters of the world's greatest river, he represented the process of Anglo-American co-operation less as a policy than a destiny. It was something that would sweep away all obstacles, however formidable, the bitterness of the American Irish, the subdued lack of interest and distaste of many Englishmen for American ways. These things would not cease to exist, they would indeed survive, but they would be carried on by the current. If in suggesting all this Mr. Churchill had been merely clever it would have done harm. His strength lay in the fact that it was true. Even although in 1940 it could not be exactly foreseen with what perfect incompetence the Axis powers would sweep America into war, the war was already in the logic of facts. A power like Japan had nurtured its expansionist policy too resolutely to be able to retreat before its rival in the Pacific. A country like Nazi Germany had dedicated itself too firmly to the principle of hatred as a self-justifying, all-compelling motive in national policy, not to collide with the Liberal and tolerant ideas of America.

In this way Mr. Churchill rendered a service of peculiar value to the cause of the Allies. Enough has been said already of his superlative qualities as a man, an orator, a strategist and a statesman. It is worth noting, however, that he had two qualities which made him especially fitted to bind together the varying ideas of the United Nations. In him Britain had found, perhaps for the first time in this century, a Prime Minister who was profoundly and ardently francophile. He was also an Americanophile, that is to say a statesman who knew by intuition and by long experience the real mood of the American people and the true conditions of Anglo-American association. Friendship with France and with America must and will remain the general policy of any British Government in the ensuing decades of the twentieth century. The political needs of the country demand and exact such a policy. But it is unlikely that England will find another leader so naturally endowed for such a policy and so highly gifted in the art of using it.

The conduct of Anglo-American relations both from London and in Washington does demand much skill in its executants, and in President Roosevelt the United States has also discovered a most gifted leader for this essential policy. The primary difficulty has been that, while the interdependence of London and Paris was an obvious fact, the interdependence of London and Washington

was not. The thesis has now been proved. In 1919 this interdependence was recognized by many of the best leaders in both countries. President Wilson himself, a jurist and historian as well as a far-seeing statesman, realized it as well as any other, although such a policy was antipathetic to large elements in his party and, as it proved, to the mass of the American people. To render secure the association of the three great centres of western civilization, Paris, London and Washington, Wilson was willing to diverge from all the accepted maxims of American foreign policy. He accepted the request of the French to give a joint guarantee with Britain for the security of the Rhine frontier. He was the prime mover in the adoption of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which promised assistance for any nation threatened with attack by an aggressive neighbour. The first was objected to in America because it was too precise and specific. The second was opposed because it seemed to commit America to action in too many unforeseen and undefined contingencies. It is probable that any compromise between the two extremes would also have met defeat. For American sentiment in the years after the last war swung violently in reaction against the ideals and beliefs with which America went to war in 1917. The depth of this reaction was never quite fully understood in Great Britain or in France. In spite of the size of America and the variations in social conditions and political feeling, opinion there can move with astonishing strength and speed. For the people of the country are mobile and their temperament is ardent and enthusiastic. The sudden success of the prohibition movement is one example; the strength of the isolationist movement is another. It is wrong perhaps to describe it as a movement, in the sense of an aspiration for something new. It was a reaction, a return to older beliefs and what were thought to be well-tried policies.

The Americans in general do not like Europe. A large number of them visit it, but this number is only a small proportion. They have all come from Europe, but few of them left Europe because they had been particularly happy or well-treated there. Some left Europe, like the pilgrim fathers, for the sake of conscience, and every religious and political persecution added to this class of American citizens. If it is true that the majority emigrated to seek adventure and to better themselves, as is the case of most emigrants within Europe or out of it, the Americans have set themselves as a pattern and example the *élite* who emigrated on principle. In

choosing the more unworldly and inspiring acts of their forefathers as a touchstone for their own conduct and ideas, the Americans have done what all virile and moral nations should do. But the political consequence is an aversion to Europe and to any participation in its affairs. Americans feel that Europe is a bad place; they feel that they are better for not being in Europe or of Europe. To a proud Parisian, apt to consider that civilization can almost be reckoned by an inverse ratio of the distance from Paris, this American attitude may seem arrogant and absurd. He may think that western civilization, of which America is a part, was cradled and is still found at its best in the Île de France. The citizens of Detroit will not agree with him. The American feels himself to be emancipated; emancipated from what? He may not be very clear on the subject, from monarchy and aristocracy, from tyranny of all sorts, from the constriction of closely graded class societies, from the pettiness of narrow village life, from miserably restricted economic opportunity. The men of the French Revolution prided themselves on establishing the principle of the career open to the talents. The New World did better; it provided the careers.

Not only do Americans at all times entertain such sentiments about Europe, but after the last war such sentiments became particularly strong. So many of them had gone to Europe in the war. They had not received a favourable impression. This may seem a sad result of all the admirable efforts made in France and Britain to welcome and impress our American allies, but it is not in itself surprising. Armies do not always like the countries in which they find themselves obliged to fight. But what was more important was that Americans began to resent the fact that there had been a war at all. In the great reaction, more universal and comprehensive than corresponding movements in France and England, the war was conceived as unnecessary and useless. Nowhere did the Treaty of Versailles receive more condemnation than in America. The notion grew up that Wilson had been deceived and outwitted by the two crafty Europeans, Clemenceau and Lloyd George. A punitive and crooked peace settlement had been imposed, and, although the reason for its rejection by the Senate was the Covenant of the League, Americans began to be glad that they had not ratified the Treaty. America in fact chose to be disillusioned both about the war and about the peace. It is a common sequel to wars and to other stirring and exhausting events. There is little good in complaining too much about it. One of the greatest of English

statesmen, Gladstone, himself an idealist, once remarked in his old age that men have no right to suffer from disenchantment; they ought to know that ideals in politics are never realized. It is sage advice, but how seldom is it listened to, above all, how seldom does it appeal to the young.

Since it was a common belief in America that the last war had not been worth waging, it was obvious that powerful mental resistance would be opposed to any attempt by the British to persuade them to enter another war in Europe. The famous orator, Edmund Burke, had said that a people cannot be argued into slavery. So also a great nation cannot be argued into war. Only the course of events and its own perception of danger can do that. But curiously enough many Americans had come to think that they could be argued into war, that this is what had happened in 1917. It may seem strange that a nation so powerful, so outwardly self-confident as the Americans, should believe this. Were they not the very nation of whom Burke had so rightly predicted that they could not be argued into slavery? It seemed much too flattering a tribute to the intelligent Frenchmen and Englishmen who had presented the Allied case in America from 1914 onwards. It takes no account of such positive acts as the killing of American citizens on the high sea, of Germany's proclamation of unrestricted submarine warfare, of the strange doings of Herr von Papen in the Washington Embassy. Yet the view was prevalent, and such is the general suspicion of people in our age for all propaganda, that it must be conceded to be not unnatural. But it set British leaders and journalists a very difficult task. Our case had to be stated to America. Dr. Goebbels was extremely active on the other side, and his work had to be counteracted. His task also was so much easier. He had to persuade the Americans to stay out of the war. We had to persuade them to assist us in all possible ways. And we had to do this in such a way that we could not be accused of openly advocating participation.

Great Britain then could not appeal; she could only demonstrate. The Americans in general were fairly sure which side they wanted to win. Their dislike of the dictators was strong and far more vigorously expressed in their newspapers than it had been in London and Paris. Indeed both France and England had been bitterly blamed for their failure to arrest the dictators in their course. The main thing for British statesmen and publicists to do was to give proof that Britain was worth sympathizing with, that she was

worth helping. There was a strong current of defeatism about the prospects of the Allies. The first nine months of the war provided, as it seemed, every justification for this defeatism in America. Could England possibly survive after the defeat of France? This was the question that had to be answered. It was answered by events and not by words. The brilliant pilots of the Royal Air Force, who won the Battle of Britain, and the civil population of London gave the most effective replies. Sober, truthful, reliable news was what America required. It was provided. The greatest news slogan of the war was that sent out by the American journalists who lived in London during the air-raids and sent home the message, "London can take it." Americans were deeply reassured; many of them indeed were surprised. For they had not been immune from the idea, sedulously spread by England's enemies, that the English were a somewhat decadent people who could not endure much hammering. Not that Dr. Goebbels had to work hard on this theme. There is a general tendency in the English-speaking world to suppose that the English are soft. It is the impression which they make. To some extent it is the effect of the accent with which the southern English speak their language. More generally it is the consequence of the fact that people who have lived more hardily, closer to the elements, as men do or used to do in a new country, have occasion to display greater powers of endurance than the inhabitants of a settled country. It is a consequence of the superiority which men who have made their way from poverty feel for a society which has known in greater degree and over a longer period the refinements of wealth. It is in a way the attitude of the countryman to the townsman.

Nothing that the English could do appeared to dissipate this suspicion. It was vain to talk of Trafalgar and Waterloo, of the hard soldiers' battles of the Crimean War, of Gallipoli, Ypres, the Somme and Paschendaele. It was useless to point out that English military history showed that "taking it" had been the peculiar virtue of English soldiers and had often been called upon to remedy the defects of leaders. A deeply rooted popular impression does not readily yield to the mere pedantry of historical fact. But what no other events had done the bombing of London accomplished. The bearing of the civil population and the calmness of the whole country impressed Americans deeply. One of the inheritances of the earlier history of America has been the "frontier spirit", by which is meant those customs and simple virtues which are fostered

by the primitive colonizing life, neighbourliness, hardihood, adaptability. With the air attacks on England the frontier was changed from Arizona to London. It was in Rotherhithe, Poplar, Bermondsey, Dulwich, Croydon, and Westminster itself. City by city the whole country came to endure similar experiences. Still there was no sign of a break. The other great event was the long period of brilliant air victories which lightened the otherwise dismal autumn of 1940. This showed that England could produce brilliant young pilots, which indeed had probably not been doubted, although too often there was an impression that a very large proportion were Canadians. Certainly the Canadians had volunteered most readily and the Empire Air Force have been admirably served by them. But as a proportion of these forces they cannot be compared with the Englishmen who man the aircraft of Fighter Command. England in this respect suffers from being, within the Empire, the majority nation. What others, Scots, Welsh, New Zealanders, do is noteworthy because they are fewer, and so the fact that they have been distinguished in some exploit is mentioned. The Englishmen's deeds are not noticed as such. Englishmen are just members of His Majesty's Forces; unless it is otherwise stated they can be assumed to form the greater part of any contingent involved in fighting.

The other element which was vital in winning the Battle of Britain was the excellence of British aero-engineering. This was well known to experts, but it probably came as a surprise to the American public, who take such legitimate pride in their own engineering achievements and had heard so much about German aircraft technique. Later on in the winter of 1940 came the first victories of the British army, but as these were only over the Italian army they could not be regarded as a decisive test. When the German forces did appear in Africa there began a long up-and-down struggle with many British reverses. It is probably true to say that it was not until the final British offensive under Generals Alexander and Montgomery, which began at Alamein and ended at Tunis, that the confidence of the Americans in British land forces was completely won. As for the Royal Navy, its traditions were such that its valour and skill were not seriously in question, but the Americans were greatly relieved when the first year of the war passed without any overwhelming disaster falling upon the Navy by air attack. Disasters were still to come, but in the Pacific area and not in British waters.

These impressions of success were important, for it was absurd to expect America to venture upon any military expedition to Europe if it were likely to end in failure. The greater part of the United States navy was needed in the Pacific to watch Japan. The United States army was small, no larger than the British army before the outbreak of war and one-third smaller if measured as a fraction of the population. If any units had been lost a valuable portion of the leaven of trained men required to train an army of continental scale would have been lost. Britain then had to prove herself worthy as a possible ally. Her propaganda to America, if such it can be called, was a propaganda of restraint. It consisted more in avoiding appeals and arguments which might so easily overshoot the mark, in restraining impudent and officious advocates who might give offence. Above all it had to avoid reproaches such as a people facing dangers are liable to make to any professed friends who do not offer full military support. On the whole remarkable restraint was displayed and to some extent enforced.

In the White House President Roosevelt was as we know determined to do his best for the Allied cause, and he could at least see the terrible dangers facing America if Europe should be forcibly united under Hitler's new order. It was very different with Congress, which represented the more cautious mood of the people. Owing to the fact that the populous eastern states are not proportionally represented in the Senate, Congress was in some respects unduly weighted in favour of isolationism. Roosevelt is a consummate judge of political opinion. In this he is superior to his predecessor Wilson, whose political heir he is, and Wilson's career had shown how a too rigid and ardent prosecution of a certain policy may defeat itself. The President therefore moved carefully. His first step after the outbreak of war was to persuade Congress to repeal the neutrality act passed at the time of the Abyssinian war. This act had the effect of isolating the United States from all belligerent countries. It thereby deprived that belligerent who had command of the sea from importing war materials from America. The psychology behind this act was to condemn all belligerents for being belligerents. There might be a difference in the cases of the two parties; one might be, in American opinion, more or less in the right, but it could not be sufficiently in the right to justify America in any steps which might involve her in actual war. And this might easily happen. It had happened in 1917, and

the American people remembered this. President Roosevelt, however, could appeal from the new conception of neutrality to the classic conception of neutrality as it had been practised by America during other wars. The appeal succeeded, but to avoid those collisions which American opinion dreaded, all American shipping was ordered away from the war area, that is from the coasts of Britain and France and Germany. This meant that although the Allies could now purchase war materials in America they had to convey them in their own vessels and at their own risk. In view of the conditions of modern sea and air warfare this was not an unreasonable precaution for America to take. The purchase of materials was a useful assistance to the Allies, although it was a long time before such supplies arrived in any significant quantity. In the end it has proved of the utmost value for the American war effort, because the earlier British and French orders set American factories on to war production, encouraged them to acquire the necessary machine tools and train the workers for many forms of production which later became of urgent need to the Americans themselves. This has often been pointed out by the directors of America's war production since 1941.

In the summer of 1941 it became apparent to President Roosevelt and his advisers that more help was needed for Britain than the mere freedom to purchase. In the first place the financial resources of England in dollars would soon be exhausted, and the danger of losing what was purchased by sinkings at sea became so serious. The escort of convoys across the Atlantic was a major problem of war strategy, and the war could be lost for the lack of such escorts. At one time in 1940 according to a statement by Mr. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, between 70 and 80 British destroyers were in dock for repairs, leaving only 90 for the protection of the fleet and for convoys. On September 3rd it was announced that the United States Government had agreed to transfer 50 destroyers to Great Britain in exchange for a lease for 99 years of certain naval and aerial bases in the British-owned islands in the New World. This positive and timely assistance caused the greatest satisfaction in England. It is true that as an exchange the material balance was heavily in favour of the United States. The destroyers which President Roosevelt was able to transfer were over-age ships, which under the naval treaties had not been kept in full commission. Their equipment, especially in anti-aircraft guns, was deficient. But for the purpose of guard-

ing convoys they had merits, and they were desperately needed. In due course they were brought over, equipped and sent to sea. One or two were given to the naval forces of the Allies operating from British ports.

American assistance, to be effective, however, had to be on a wider and more permanent basis. The President saw this. He had recently been re-elected for another term of office and his power was secure. His defeated rival, Mr. Wendell Wilkie, had been the most interventionist of the possible Republican candidates. Roosevelt therefore found the moment favourable for asking Congress for powers to supply Great Britain with such goods as were necessary for the continuation of the war. He knew that these goods could not be paid for; he knew also from past experience that to finance the purchase by a loan was a transaction which would lead to financial confusion after the war. He could not in the circumstances ask for a pure subsidy in the way that British Governments had so often in the past asked from Parliament for the support of their allies in war. He therefore hit on the ingenious device which came to be known as "lease-lend". Thus the goods were neither bought by Britain nor given by America; they were lent. In theory they might be returned if not used up or not required. As regards some categories of goods this is a purely abstract distinction. An expended anti-aircraft shell or a used depth charge cannot be given back. A ship or even an aircraft or a motor-car may however be returned and still be of some use. The project was in effect a subsidy, but the difference was sufficient to make it possible for Congress to accept the proposal. It did not pass rapidly through Congress. The House of Representatives accepted it on February 8th, 1941, and the Senate on March 8th.

With the adoption of the policy of lease and lend the major economic problems of Britain and her Allies were solved. The supplies of food, raw materials or manufactured goods which they required for the prosecution of the war were now assured. The only limit to the amount was the limit to the sum which the United States Congress would appropriate for the purpose. These sums have always been adequate. From March 1941 onwards President Roosevelt led the United States by a series of well-calculated steps to ever fuller support of Great Britain, "short of war".

On June 16th, 1941, all German consulates in the United States

were closed, a severe blow to German propaganda and espionage. On July 7th the President states that American troops have taken up positions in Iceland and Greenland. British troops had been in Iceland since after the occupation of Denmark, but it was an additional security to have the Americans there also. Greenland was of great importance for observation both of shipping in arctic waters and of the weather. But a much more dramatic step was in preparation, a political event of the first magnitude. On August 14th the British people were told in the morning that that afternoon, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, would make an important statement on the wireless. There was much speculation. Where then was Mr. Churchill, it was asked? Since Mr. Attlee was speaking, Mr. Churchill must be out of the country? In due course Mr. Attlee explained the riddle. He told the public that Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt had conferred together on board ship at a point off the coast of North America and had agreed on a common declaration of policy. The declaration was then read carefully, clause by clause. This was the famous Atlantic Charter. In itself it did not state any principle which had not already been asserted by the leaders of the two nations. But these principles, solemnly and briefly drawn together in one document, made the assertion more impressive and more precise. From the point of view of American opinion it was of the greatest importance to have a statement of the aims and purposes of the war. Americans who hesitated to intervene in Europe were continually asking what were the aims of Great Britain. This usually took the form of asking how they could be sure that there would not be "another Versailles". The Atlantic Charter answered them, and strangely enough its terms were reminiscent of President Wilson's fourteen points and it did not require a very severe exercise of the logical faculty to discover that any peace based on the charter would resemble in its broad outlines the Treaty of Versailles. There was the same insistence on the ending of the tyrannous forms of government that had started the war. There was the same insistence that all nations within their own territories were entitled to freedom. There was the same advocacy of the need for mutual organization by all nations with a view to the maintenance of general peace throughout the world. The two most significant variations were these: Firstly there was a more positive emphasis on the need and the right of peoples to greater *economic* security and prosperity. Secondly the need for the unilateral and entire disarmament of

the aggressor states was more vigorously asserted without any suggestion of a time limit.

Thus America, while still non-belligerent, set her hand to a programme to be put into operation in the event of victory. The apparent illogicality of such a proceeding is explained by the fact that there was nothing that made the American people inclined to refuse the initiatives of their President so much as the fear that the war would be followed by disillusionment. The shorthand phrase for such disillusionment had been, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, the word "Versailles". This may seem strange to Frenchmen, many of whom were disillusioned at the time by the weaknesses and leniency of the peace, and by the failure later on to preserve and operate the guarantees it provided against the military renaissance of Germany. But so it is. The treaty had come, for a very complex series of reasons, to be regarded with extreme disfavour in Britain and the United States, especially, but by no means exclusively, in radical political circles. The present author has always considered this view to be ignorant and erroneous, but he is bound to attest its prevalence. The myth of Versailles dies hard. It was all the more important therefore that the leaders of America and Britain should have publicly affirmed a return to the principles, though by no means to all the methods and details, of 1919.

In September the President followed up the Atlantic Charter by another important military step. On the 11th, in a radio message, he declared that he had given orders to ships of the American navy to destroy the warships of the Axis which were to be found in the "defensive waters" of the United States. No exact definition was given of the term, but it was plain that a large area of the Atlantic was covered. In effect the American navy was beginning to assist in the work of convoy. English travellers to the United States soon had the inspiring experience of observing that after so many days out from port the British destroyers escorting their convoy were replaced by American destroyers. Nothing seemed to be changed in the conduct of the convoy, but it was possible to tell that the slim grey vessels standing far out to port and starboard were of somewhat different style and cut. Uncle Sam had taken over. Meanwhile the American Government had taken measures to improve all the defences of the country. The National Guard, roughly the equivalent of the British Territorial Army, had been called up for service. Compulsory military service had been

imposed by law in September 1940. It was only a matter of time before America began to be armed on a continental scale on land and in the air.

Meanwhile the situation in Russia gave grounds for anxiety. Here again President Roosevelt was quick to act within the limits imposed on him by Congress, which, it was assumed, would still refuse a formal declaration of war. Russia's need for supplies was acute. On October 10th at a conference of the three powers in Moscow, U.S.A. joined with Britain in promising so far as possible to meet her demands for the materials necessary for the conduct of the war against Germany. Attacks were now made on American destroyers by German submarines, and on October 27th President Roosevelt declared that shooting had begun and that America was at her battle stations.

The final *dénouement*, however, was to come on the other side of the world. The Japanese had been engaging in the last negotiations prior to their long-premeditated attack. There was still hope in America that the Japanese Empire would hesitate before confronting the naval power of America. Such hopes were stronger amongst the public in proportion as they were ignorant of the real situation. The best-informed official circles knew how grave the situation was. None the less, Japan was to be given one last chance. She took it, but not in the sense in which it had been offered. A diplomat, M. Kurusu, was flown to Washington, and while he was engaged in negotiations with President Roosevelt and the Secretary of State, Mr. Hull, the Japanese navy, by manœuvring aircraft-carriers to within striking distance of the naval base of Pearl Harbour, struck a treacherous blow and inflicted grave loss on America's main battle squadron.

To this there was only one reply. Japan had declared war, first by act and then by word, and at the same time she formally declared war on Great Britain. The United States Congress replied by a formal declaration on Japan. America was at war in Asia, but not yet in Europe. It was probable that a declaration of war on Germany would follow, but how soon was not certain. Hitler solved these doubts in the most reassuring fashion. On December 11th he convoked the Reichstag to hear a declaration of war on the United States, and on the same day Mussolini crept out on to his balcony of the Palazzo Venezia to make a similar manifesto. By the mere motion of the dictators America had been brought into the war, lock, stock and barrel.

All that has happened since has been the development of this situation. There was the long series of Japanese victories which at one time seemed to threaten Australia and India. There were the series of naval victories by the Americans which brought this movement to an end, Coral Sea, Midway and Guadalcanal. The British resistance became effective on the Burmese frontier and on the coast of Ceylon. The Australians won their first successes in New Guinea. The most striking feature of the conduct of this war was the close co-operation between Roosevelt and Churchill, including three personal conferences, two in Washington and one in Casablanca. The fourth, again in Washington, has recently been concluded. From the European point of view the most significant factor has been the insistence of President Roosevelt on giving full attention to Europe, as has been done in North Africa and by the powerful American air forces in England. This was not easy for him. The average American, according to the best evidence available, considers himself primarily at war with Japan. Hirohito rather than Hitler is enemy number one. We Europeans must not be misled in this matter, even by the most violent expressions of anti-Nazi opinion in America. President Roosevelt, looking at the problem with the broad eye of a world statesman, has seen that the two problems are one, and Mr. Churchill has promised him and his people with the utmost energy that the European belligerents capable of helping will continue until Japan's defeat is complete. There is every reason to hope that these two men between them will ease the strains and stresses of conflicting policies.

When the war is over many difficulties will no doubt arise. Returning soldiers are inclined to express their feelings in the words of the old proverb, "East, west, home's best." In spite of the outspoken and continuous declarations that never again will we, any of us, try to live our national lives in and for ourselves, there will be a tendency to withdraw into more narrowly self-regarding policies. Each nation has its lesson to learn, the Anglo-Saxons that they cannot afford to allow the western coast of Europe to be occupied by a hostile military power, the French that too narrow a concentration on the eastern frontier may defeat itself. (There had been an opportunity for stopping aggression in 1935 at Suez and in the Red Sea.) These lessons are learned most effectively if self-taught, and too much preaching and counter-preaching across the water may do more harm than good. One

thing the French may demand with justice is that their demand for security shall be taken seriously and not treated as militarism and chauvinism. It has to be admitted that it was so treated by large sections of American and British opinion after 1919. There is good reason to believe that the Anglo-Saxons have learned that lesson. They find their armies once again on French soil, hoping through France to achieve the conquest of Germany. They know now that one of the reasons why their armies are there is that their people swore so many oaths that they would not go there ever again. But given this painfully acquired respect for the French demand for security, the French will find that anything they can do by moderation, by broadminded concession and adjustment, to win Anglo-Saxon confidence will be repaid many times over by those who control "the arsenals of democracy". It will indeed be casting their bread upon the waters.

XII

THE LIBERATION OF AFRICA

WHILE there was an underlying harmony of aims between the White House and Downing Street from the beginning of the war, there were of necessity many differences in political tactics. One of the most important of these difficulties was the attitude to be adopted towards the Government of Vichy. The British attitude has already been explained. It was based on the refusal to recognize the armistice as a valid instrument. The British Government therefore proceeded with the war as though the armistice had not been signed. They were willing to accept the help of any Frenchmen who would, on their own soil or on British territory, continue to resist the Germans. Such Frenchmen were regarded by the officials of Vichy as disaffected officers to be condemned in absence for insubordination and mutiny. They were denounced by the Vichy radio as traitors. This was an inevitable consequence of the acceptance of the armistice. No British Government could possibly accept this point of view. Let Frenchmen reflect on the position of Great Britain towards those gallant men, who with such inspiring faith were willing to trust in the Allied cause when many even of the best friends of Britain had all but given up hope. Men like General de Gaulle, General Catroux, General de l'Arminat, General Leclerc, General le Gentilhomme, Admirals le Muselier and Auboynau, had either to be accepted as full allies or repulsed and even sent back to their own country. Was the British Government to dismiss them at a time when every trained soldier available was of the utmost value? Were we to refuse the advantages of a friendly and belligerent Equatorial Africa when its governors were willing to accord such help and when their action was in accordance with the covenanted obligations of the French Republic with which we had entered the war?

Equatorial Africa was essential to that air-route which was built up across Africa and which was essential to rapid communications for the British and American forces in the later stages of the African war. It was from Equatorial Africa that General Leclerc made that famous anabasis across the Sahara which brought him

to the sea by Tripoli and must have caused so much preoccupation to the anxious Rommel, trying in vain to hold up the progress of General Montgomery's Eighth Army? New Caledonia was a small, remote and little populated island in the Pacific. But with a Pacific war looming up, were the British to refuse the prospect of this important island passing into firm and friendly hands? If Great Britain had refused these initiatives the Governments of Australia and New Zealand would have been dismayed. The answer to all these questions is clearly no. Sense and logic, policy and honour, forbade any other answer than a grateful and respectful acceptance of the offers of these gallant Frenchmen.

This policy was necessary not only for success in the war but for the period after the war. It was essential in the future interests of Europe that some form of Anglo-French co-operation should continue and that when the Nazis were defeated there should be Frenchmen who could claim the merit of having always resisted and who had worked as allies with the British. The separation that took place when the north of France was occupied by the Nazis was the most complete in the whole of modern history. To the historical fancy it almost recalled the days of the first Saxon conquest of Britain, when, according to the ancient historian Procopius, so little was known of the mysterious island that people in Gaul thought that the spirits of the dead were borne thither across the Channel. Only this time it was Gaul that was in shadow and Britain that was still in the light. Even the long separation of the Napoleonic wars had not been so far-reaching. In those days Madame Mère could greet her sons most brilliant victories with the doubtful phrase, "*pouvû que cela dure*" and cautiously invest in British Government funds. Wellington could pay his armies with bills upon the Bank of France, purchased from London in French-controlled Amsterdam. Much more was then left of the interplay of ideas in science and letters throughout Europe. There was no such monstrous new gospel as the Nazis held up to threaten a complete oblivion of the old standards of European culture. Napoleon had his fervent admirers in England who toasted his name, on one occasion to the anger and disgust of Prussian officers present. The modern technique of propaganda by radio could instil more poison and falsehood than any of the older devices. The French people in large numbers might take great risks and endure discomfort to pick up the broadcasts of the B.B.C. It was of the greatest importance that those who so courageously

listened should recognize a body of Frenchmen, workers and fighters for victory, able to speak of the achievements of their own forces. These men will one day return to France. It is possible that many critics will accuse them of being uncritical Anglophiles. Anglophiles we hope they will be within reasonable limits, but it is most unlikely that they will be uncritical. It is an illusion to suppose that exiles are idolaters of the country which receives them. This is not in human nature. But what is valuable is that these men will know England as she is, as she was in her darkest hour and as Churchill has called it, her finest. All sentiment apart, this knowledge will benefit both France and England. But there is no reason to suppose that the Fighting French will return as dupes or ready tools of British policy. Those who have had the honour of working close to General de Gaulle do not conceive him as a pliant instrument of England or of anything else.

Belligerent Britain therefore kept in touch with fighting France. The United States, which were it should be remembered still neutral, tried to maintain relations as cordial as the circumstances permitted with the so-called legal Government at Vichy. This policy naturally caused some shaking of the head in England and some outspoken criticism in America. A saying became current that every democracy had its pet fascist; England had Franco, America had Pétain. This statement has little more accuracy than most of such political mots uttered in suspicion and anger. Franco and Pétain existed, and how to handle them was a delicate problem. In view of the old traditional friendship between the two peoples, the American Government desired to keep some link with metropolitan France. Moreover, since North Africa provided a major strategical problem and might conceivably be a threat to America under Axis control the Americans wanted to have some hold over Vichy such as the threat of breaking off diplomatic relations. A distinguished officer, Admiral Leahy, was therefore sent to represent the United States with Pétain's Government.

Material is still insufficient to form a judgement of the value of the American policy as a contribution to victory. No doubt the State Department in Washington will be able to put up a powerful case. It should be remembered that by maintaining official contact with Vichy the United States Government was able to retain opportunities for work of a humanitarian nature which the Americans in the period of neutrality were so anxious to perform. But whatever the final verdict may be, the fact was that London and

Washington took and received very different views of France. Reliable news from the underground front in northern France was of more account in London than the latest news from Vichy. Official assurances from Marshal Pétain to Admiral Leahy had more value in Washington than in London, where secret but reliable intelligence of the latest efforts at collaboration seemed more immediately relevant. The American aim was to cultivate all possible sympathy with all possible elements in France, without scrutinizing too closely the attitude of these elements towards Nazi Germany. Certainly America was favourably placed for cultivating sympathy with France. From the beginning of their independent history the Americans had been on the whole happy in their relations with France. They owed much to France in their war of separation from the English crown. The name of Lafayette still counts for something. France and the United States have never been at war. Twice, over Louisiana under Napoleon, and over Mexico under Napoleon III, they have come close to war, but it was averted. But America has twice been at war with England. In 1812 they were at war, having France, *de facto*, as an ally. It may be that these bonds of history are not very strong. In many ways the English are much closer to America than the French in their political and social outlook and have much more binding ties of blood through immigration. The English-American antithesis, undoubtedly acute, is bridged in part by Scotsmen, Ulstermen, Canadian, and other elements which for a variety of reasons find more favour in America. On the other hand the French may claim to be the most European of Europeans, much more so than the Germans, who acclimatize themselves very easily across the Atlantic and who in modern times have emigrated in far greater numbers. Yet it was natural for the Americans to feel that it was their destiny and their mission to keep a door open upon France. Mr. Bullitt, the ambassador in June 1940, had felt it his duty to remain in Paris after the German occupation, thinking he could be of more practical help by so doing. America was not yet ready for the rôle of the liberator and the avenger; it was proper for her to play the part of the good Samaritan.

While the different parts played by London and Washington were in the circumstances appropriate and perhaps inevitable, the consequence was that while they drew nearer to each other on all other issues of the war they tended to fall apart on this one issue of France. It was clear that America would resist any open hostile

military initiative against the Allies by Vichy, but short of that she was willing to conciliate all Frenchmen. Her motto was in effect, "he who is not against us is with us." London, on the other hand, as Vichy collaboration grew with every turn of the German screw, was inclined to think that tolerance of Vichy might prove fatal. It appeared to be a policy of appeasement, and the mask, always rather transparent, might be thrown off at any moment, as had so often happened in the history of fascist aggression. "He who is not with us is against us," sounded a more realistic slogan to English ears. The movements of the Vichy Government had some correspondence with the ebb and flow of the war. Darlan's visit to Berchtesgaden coincided with the conquest of the Balkans and the attack on Crete. Could it not be said that firm and resolute action impressed Vichy more than fair words? Perhaps more important still was the conviction that Vichy was at no time representative of the people of France—that a Government which only existed by Germany's permission and will could never be recognized by any body of French opinion when that opinion was free again to express itself.

The two most important events of the war, after the invasion of England had been called off, were the German attack on Russia and the entry of America into the war. The former event naturally encouraged the policy of collaboration. It gave the Axis a rallying cry that was not without some power. Fear of "Bolshevism" had not been an entirely meaningless appeal in the two decades between the wars. The Comintern, now happily dissolved, had been a force to reckon with. It had never been as powerful as either its friends or its enemies had expected, as is proved by the successful rise of fascism and the fact that the war which finally broke upon Europe was a national war and not a class war. To many students of politics in the nineteen-twenties this event seemed almost incredible. Communists and socialists perhaps are entitled to be pained by the complacency with which elements of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie viewed the impending doom of Moscow, but they should not be surprised. They had vowed the destruction of hearths and altars in the name of Marxian revolution. When fascism became a world-wide menace they called on all good men to unite for its overthrow. In a twinkling of an eye they became patriots, even militarists. Again in the twinkling of an eye when they heard of the Moscow Pact of 1939 they reverted to their former rôle of pacifists. Many honest Frenchmen, men who had

voted with the Bloc Nationale in 1919 must have responded in some degree to the anti-Bolshevik appeal. In America some isolationists made good use of the anti-bolshevik feeling in their country. The *Chicago Tribune* in November 1941 could publish a cartoon showing Roosevelt linking arms with the Soviet in the form of a horrible demon labelled "the worst régime in history". In England even in the most conservative circles such ideas had no vitality. The English knew very well what was "the worst régime in history". Their demonology was directed against Berlin and Berlin alone. Here was another possible source of difference between Washington and London and another source of misunderstanding between men in France and men in England who would otherwise have been in political sympathy with each other. Some temporary success must be conceded to Hitler and Ribbentrop in this matter. In America, thanks to the strong leadership of President Roosevelt's administration, it had little effect. Its effect in Vichy must have been much more serious.

After the coming of Russia into the war came the entry of America. This, it might have seemed, would have precipitated a crisis. Pétain and Darlan may have realized at last that Allied victory was no longer a forlorn hope but a probable event. They may have been comforted by the thought that re-alliance with Britain did not mean attaching themselves to the chariot of Moscow. It meant accepting the alliance of a power which was indeed a great democracy but the most individual and bourgeois of modern societies, a state more boldly capitalist than any European power had dared to be for many years past, where the mildly collectivist Liberalism of Mr. Roosevelt had driven most business men to a veritable frenzy of opposition and disgust. Yet there came no sign that Vichy was able to change its policies. The United States recalled Admiral Leahy but still kept up diplomatic relations with Vichy. The final break was not made until November 9th, 1942. The policy of seeking good will was kept up to the last possible moment.

The events of the first half of 1942 gave some encouragement to those few in France who took their stand with Hitler and his pseudo-European policy. There was much to dismay the rest of France which hoped for a German defeat. But in the autumn the tide turned, and on November 7th the Allied armada was standing off the coasts of French North Africa both in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Now at last the British and Americans were able to do what they had been so bitterly reproached for not doing in

1940, or rather for lacking the means to do. They appeared in overwhelming force on land, air and on the sea. They offered the French of North Africa a strong garrison for defence and promised the supplies of weapons and material with which the French could continue the struggle. They undertook to effect the complete liberation of France without any qualifications, without any reserves. Here are the words of President Roosevelt's proclamation:

"We come among you to repel the cruel invaders who would deprive you for ever of the right to govern yourselves, deprive you of the right to worship God as you please and to take from you the right to live your lives in peace and safety. We come among you only to crush and annihilate your enemies. Rest assured, we wish to do you no harm. We promise you that, once the threat of Germany and Italy shall be removed, we will leave your territory immediately."

A similar and shorter message was broadcast in the name of the British and American Governments jointly.

As this message was broadcast the landings began. A large part of the population responded at once and prepared to welcome the Allies. In some places on the coast, however, the troops obeyed the order to resist and there were casualties on both sides. But by November 11th both in Morocco and Algeria all fighting ended. This news was hailed with the greatest satisfaction in England. But the question was also asked, why was it necessary to fight at all? Was it done in the absurd hope that a show of resistance would deter Hitler from occupying southern France in order to strengthen his position in the Mediterranean? Was it the mere reflex action of strict military discipline? Or was it due to a genuine sympathy with the Axis, its aims in the war, its conception of government? All the confused events of these days are not yet fully known in England, and it is not easy to interpret them. The most startling event of all was that Admiral Darlan happened to be in Algeria at the time. It was he who, three days after the landings, ordered the cease fire. Next day he sent out his call to the French fleet in home waters to join the Allies. It was he who on December 4th assumed the direction *de jure et de facto* of the French Colonial empire. On December 24th he was assassinated by the act, as it would seem, of an isolated fanatic.

All this appeared somewhat strange to the English public.

They had been told that General Giraud was the leader on the French side of the allied expedition. Admiral Darlan's conversion might be welcomed. It could be interpreted as a prudent recantation by a man who had changed his mind on the outcome of the war. It could be explained more charitably that Darlan had always meant to come to the allied side and that his pourparlers with Hitler were a clever sham, but this view found few supporters. But two things were not easy to explain. He had ordered the cease fire on the third day. Why not on the first? And why should he and not Giraud, or alternatively some supporter and emissary of de Gaulle, be made the executive chief of North Africa? All these questions were asked, but they could not be pressed. Mr. Churchill had long before arranged with President Roosevelt that the expedition to North Africa should be under the command of an American general to whom would be entrusted the decision of all political problems. General Eisenhower, who was chosen, was a distinguished officer who had been the first American commander-in-chief of the American forces in Great Britain. It was for him and his advisers to take all the steps necessary for the rapid occupation of North Africa and for securing those political conditions most beneficial for the struggle that had to be waged before the Germans were driven from Africa. For while the occupation had been rapid it had not been quite rapid enough. The British First Army, under General Anderson, which occupied the eastern part of Algeria, pressed on as quickly as it could to Tunis and Bizerta. But the communications were long and poor and air support took time to organize. The Germans were able to throw forces into Tunisia and to thrust back the weak British columns which confronted them. On both sides an organized front was built up from the sea-coast to the desert. It became evident that a long period of preparation was necessary before General Eisenhower could mount a strong enough offensive and before General Alexander could finish his fighting advance of 2,000 kilometres from Egypt.

The assassination of Admiral Darlan compelled the appointment of a new High Commissioner for North Africa, and this time General Giraud assumed the post. This was well received in England, but it soon became known that the highest posts in the Administration were still reserved for men who had been com-
plaisant in the highest degree to Vichy and who had therefore been acting for the period of the armistice as the effective agents of

the policy of collaboration. There arose in the English press a considerable agitation, and astonishment was expressed that those who had shown real good will to the cause of resistance were, as it seemed, deliberately excluded from their due share of power and responsibility. On the American side also there was criticism. Two of the chief American broadcasters in Algiers, Mr. Collingwood and Mr. McVane, spoke out boldly as to the dismay they felt. In America itself a volume of criticism arose against the State Department and the Administration in general. To some extent there was in this a tendency to heresy hunting by politicians of the Left who were inclined to see a fascist behind every uniform. But it was much more than this. And the burden of the complaints made by serious critics was not that the extreme *tendresse* shown to former Vichy leaders was derogatory to the Allies, British or American. It was rather that the critics had their eye on France itself. What, it was asked, would be the effect on the opinion of the true France, on the men who were enduring hardship and danger in the movement of resistance? The British have no desire to influence the future politics of France. Themselves a free people, they know well enough how much another free people will resent interference from outside. But they do most earnestly desire to win the confidence of France. They want to avoid any imputation of misunderstanding the real France, of being suspected of trying to rig the situation in Africa in such a way that it might influence the final evolution of the French state after liberation. The feeling that the mood of metropolitan France was ardent and enthusiastic was enhanced in England by an event both sombre and heroic. When Hitler sent his forces across the demarcation line to occupy all the south, the French fleet at Toulon was in danger of capture by the enemy. On November 27th, when the military occupation of Toulon by the Axis was near, the officers and men of the fleet under Admiral Laborde exploded charges in their vessels and sank them. The enemy as he arrived found nothing but a huge problem in salvage, a second Scapa Flow. Opinion in England was profoundly impressed, and the news dwarfed for the moment the victories in Africa and Russia and the tremendous raids by the R.A.F. on Turin. Englishmen did not want their leaders to be false to the spirit of Toulon.

But to all criticism and to all complaints the British Government had one answer. The supreme command was in American hands. General Eisenhower and his advisers must decide what

steps in the political field were required for the prosecution of the campaign to free all Africa. Right or wrong they must proceed as seemed best to the commander on the spot. What was done might be mistaken, but it was not to be questioned. However much various people in all the three countries might deplore the political events in Africa at this time, the principle of undivided responsibility was sound. One of the lessons of the last war most conscientiously learned was the need for a unified command. As has been seen, the subordination of Lord Gort to General Gamelin in 1939 was approved in England almost without a murmur of criticism. In the South Pacific theatre the American General MacArthur was given a command including American, Australian and New Zealand forces. In the East Indies the British General Wavell was placed in supreme command of British, Indian, American and Dutch forces. In success or in failure this principle was to be followed with a logical rigour unusual in Anglo-Saxon proceedings. North Africa had been agreed upon as an American command. That was the decision; it must be observed. Perhaps after all, the political events in Algiers, although important, are of much less weight than the voice of France, which will in due course speak. If there is a clear and decisive movement of political feeling in liberated France it will achieve its own fulfilment. One is reminded of the Scottish sage Carlyle, who was told of an American prophetess who had summed up the creed of a new religion of her own creation in the phrase, "I accept the Universe." On hearing this the old man grimly remarked, "Gad, she'd better."

The events of the North African campaign are too well known and too recent to require any repetition here. There was the period of stalemate in the hills to the south-west of Bizerta. There followed the dangerous thrust by the Germans, which was only checked with hard fighting and at the last moment. Meanwhile the Eighth Army was drawing nearer from the east. Tripoli, Mareth, Sfax were occupied in turn. French forces fought hard in the campaign, organized hastily after the confusion of the armistice disarmament restrictions, armed for the most part with the weapons of 1939 to face an enemy armed to the standard of 1943. It was a real Allied army, tripartite like the armies which Foch commanded in the autumn of 1918. The final stroke at Tunis and Bizerta came like a flash of lightning, and the German General von Arnim and his Italian colleague Messc surrendered with all their men. It was finally computed that 350,000 Axis

troops with enormous masses of equipment were lost to the enemy in this final rout. The Russian victory at Stalingrad was brilliantly matched. The tide of German victory was beginning to ebb both in the snow and in the sand.

The final stage of the war is still before us and our leaders warn us not to speculate too much nor to hope too easily. Their conduct is very different from that of the enemy in the hour of his triumph when August 15th, 1940, was fixed as the date for the surrender of England and when in 1941 the Russian army was said to be unable to rise again, and the way to Moscow clear. Indeed the remoter future is easier to think of than the immediate present of the war. England and France will again be in their old position of neighbours and allies. Their dependence on each other will be no less than before. Their national cultures, rich, varied, in the best sense of the word liberal, will be able once again to complement and fertilize each other. The hope may be expressed that this co-operation in the future will be more personal and active and less academic and literary than it has too often been in the past. It may be hoped that Englishmen will think of France less as country to tour in and more as a country which they genuinely desire to know, that Frenchmen will think of England less as a country to read about and more as a country to visit. People in both countries will no doubt reflect that it was probably within their power to have prevented the situation which made this war possible from maturing. Such reflections will be bitter, and controversy on the history of the past twenty years will last as long as there are historians to write about it.

Englishmen know that they have lessons to learn. They must take more seriously the prospect of war and the need of defence. They have to learn that civilization is more effectively defended on the first rampart rather than in the last ditch. As we have seen, material for this lesson has been furnished to them abundantly. It is impertinent for an Englishman to tell the French what lessons they require to learn. But it is worth stating what Englishmen hope for and fear about France. They hope to see France strong and united in freedom, they fear dictatorship on the one hand and faction on the other hand. Those who know the history of France, and French history is better known in England than that of any other foreign country, realize well enough that the French nation in a time of crisis has often shown a wonderful solidarity. But they could wish that the aspect of political life in France had made

it easier to convince Englishmen of the unity of France. And it is more than a mere question of appearance. The French Revolution, however splendid and far-reaching its vivifying influences, made a lesion in the polity of France deeper than anything that has occurred in England for centuries past.* How France will rebuild her polity is a problem for Frenchmen, and in many quarters in England it is feared that Anglo-American policy has recently been ill-adapted to assist the French to unity in the hour of liberation. It is realized also that the events of the war, the separation of so many parts of French territory, have created problems as they also provide new opportunities. The long suppression of free speech by the enemy and the confusing babel of contradictory views which has been showered on the French from so many sources, from Frenchmen free in London, from Frenchmen under duress in Vichy, from enemy countries and from neutral countries, must make difficulties in mutual understanding. The rapidity and completeness with which unity is attained will, however, be the measure taken by the outside world of the true restoration of France to her greatness and vitality. On this subject Englishmen will do well to express their hopes rather than to offer advice.

There has been one interesting effect of the war on British political opinion about France. The concept of the French Republic has come to be better understood than it had been before. In the first few decades of the Third Republic, aristocratic and conservative opinion in England was inclined to view with some distaste the republican institutions across the Channel. It seemed a pity that France could not be like England a constitutional monarchy. Bismarck as we know was not sorry to encourage such ideas, and he was satisfied that France should remain in her republican quarantine in the Europe of glittering courts. His expectations were disappointed, and the Republic came to have the alliance first of Russia and then of England. And this came about less because of the incompetence of his successors than of the inherent rottenness of his own principles of Prussian *machtpolitik*. On the other hand the Liberal party in England was better affected to the French Republic and knew it to be a barrier against the dreaded dictatorship. The great Gladstone realized where the interests of British democracy lay. In his memoirs Mr. Lloyd George tells us how in the 'nineties, when he was an ardent young Radical member of Parliament, he was invited with some colleagues to be of a company to meet the illustrious Nestor of English states-

manship. Gladstone spoke most earnestly to his followers of his fear and suspicion of Bismarckian Germany and told them that they must never lose touch with the liberal and democratic elements of republican France. The war of 1914 found that tradition still vigorous. But in the twenty years after the war a change took place. So many thrones fell in 1918 that republican institutions lost some of their glamour to the democratic world. The new antithesis in politics was said to be the bourgeois—proletariat antithesis. A republic that was a bourgeois republic was no better than any other form of state. And the third republic was eminently bourgeois. The man in a dress suit in the Elysée became the butt not only of royalists and aristocrats but of ardent democrats as well. The Government of France was spoken of by English as well as by French socialists as the rule of the two hundred families. Whatever degree of truth there was in this, it ignored the two million families, the peasants, the small proprietors, the typical citizens of the Republic. So sentiment in England fell away somewhat from the French Republic. The war, however, has shown that the ideas for which the Republic stood were living. Good republicans have on the whole proved good patriots. The enemy found it easier to discover instruments amongst the bad republicans, although there are no doubt many exceptions to this statement. For there is such a thing as republican virtue, a genuine love of liberty, a genuine devotion, not to a leader as such, not to the state as a master, but to the general community of fellow-citizens. This conception has been fostered and illustrated by the trials of war. In England a parliamentary monarchy expresses it and adapts it to the sentiments of all members of the nation. It is realized well enough that a republic in some form best serves the purpose in France.

In the press and vicissitudes of war it is not easy to tell exactly how feeling is running with regard to other nations. Day by day one's attention is switched from one part of the world to another; any country, any continent may produce the absorbing news of the day. It cannot be denied that many events in France have come as a shock to Englishmen, whether like the fall of France it has been a shock for which he knew he must take much blame, or the doings of the collaborators and the equivocations of Vichy which are still so difficult to comprehend. But the feeling of community with France and admiration for France are real and constant, although the present author realizes that in his private feelings

and in his own interpretation of history he probably outstrips the majority of his fellow-countrymen in his enthusiastic confidence in the genius of the French nation. Britain and France have so much in common and have shared so much and learned so much from each other. Their culture in the middle ages was a common inheritance. The Court of England spoke French, and the laws of England were administered in French. An Englishman cannot write a page of his own language without mixing a word of French derivation with each word of the original Saxon. The University of Oxford claims paternity from Paris and even at the height of her medieval fame asked to be called no more than "the second daughter" of the Church. Even our fiercest wars have never been complete separations. During the wars of Louis XIV England was full of French Huguenots and France of English Catholics and Jacobites. In the time of the Revolutionary wars French priests and emigrés were welcomed and supported in England and English radicals were to be seen in Paris. The orator Burke was the enemy of the Revolution, but he was an admirer of traditionalist France, France as conceived by de Maistre and Chateaubriand. The philosopher Bentham had French citizenship conferred upon him by the National Assembly.

England is often under the influence of strong currents of teutonophilia. Within limits this is reasonable unless it should turn into teutonomania. Yet in the end the needle tends to swing back towards Paris as the truer source of a deeper enlightenment. The common impressions of Englishmen about things German are not as a rule flattering. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*. The word "Prussian" is likely to suggest an adjective like brutal or a noun like jackboot. The word French gives the suggestion of such ideas as clarity, wit, intelligence and grace. The lettered and cultivated classes in England especially have looked more constantly to France for inspiration than to any other nation of Europe. If Frenchmen doubt this the Germans do not and have often observed it with rancour and indignation. How the mutual good and the continued advance of our two national spirits can be secured and perfected is a political problem of the first magnitude. It will call for patience and understanding on both sides. We can only declare, not merely as an aspiration but as an affirmation of will, *esto perpetua*.

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